

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

ROMEO AND JULIET ON THE ENGLISH STAGE:

FOUR CENTURIES OF INTERPRETATION

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

(FALL, 1982)

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

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TITLE OF THESIS Romeo and Juliet on the English Stage: Four Centuries
of Interpretation

DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS PRESENTED Master of Arts

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED 1982

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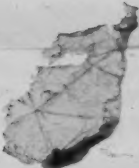
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FOR MY PARENTS

ABSTRACT

Next to Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet has been for audiences the most enduringly popular of all Shakespeare's dramas on the English stage. Although the text of the play has received a fair measure of study from critics, very little has been written on how directors and actors through the centuries have interpreted the play. This thesis, therefore, examines various changes in interpretation that the play has undergone in four centuries of performance on the English stage and proposes reasons for those variations in interpretation.

Four representative productions of the play from the Restoration to the present day have been chosen for study: David Garrick's at Drury Lane in 1748, Henry Irving's at the Lyceum in 1882, William Poel's at the Royalty in 1905, and Franco Zeffirelli's at the Old Vic in 1960. Both Garrick and Irving were the leading theatrical figures of their ages, actor-managers who were strongly bound by contemporary theatrical conventions and tastes but whose pre-eminence also allowed them to introduce important innovations to their presentations of Romeo and Juliet which markedly influenced many subsequent productions of the play. Their versions of Romeo and Juliet thus became the definitive versions of the play in their own ages. Garrick restored a more original text of the play than had been performed in England since the Restoration yet conceded to the eighteenth century's taste for spectacle and sentimentality by interpolating a funeral procession and dirge and a

seventy-five-line death scene. His alterations to Shakespeare's plot, characterization and language were largely grounded in the tenets of neo-classical tragic theory. Irving's production reflected the nineteenth-century trend toward restoration of Shakespeare's texts but also accommodated that century's taste for historical realism and pictorialization. In interpretation the forty-four-year-old Irving envisioned a whole production concept which could accommodate his playing Romeo as a more mature, sombre lover.

Twentieth-century Shakespearean production, by contrast, has been characterized both by an enormous proliferation of performances on the English stage and a great diversity in approach to those presentations. Two major trends, however, have emerged. Zeffirelli's production, representative of the twentieth-century eclectic attitude in which "anything goes," has made Shakespeare relevant to modern concerns. For Zeffirelli this was a contemporary drama; Shakespeare was given a modern sociological relevance and Romeo and Juliet were presented as unaffected teenagers having much in common with young people in the twentieth century. In his treatment of the play Zeffirelli sacrificed Shakespeare's romanticism for realism. William Poel's production, on the other hand, aimed at a complete restoration of Shakespeare's text on the stage and used that text as the sole authority for interpretation. The integrity of the text, the continuity of the action, the non-localized scene, the swift and musically inflected speech -- these were the principles that Poel's 1905 production of Romeo and Juliet embodied.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Ronald Ayling, for his support of this thesis, his patient reading of the drafts and his many suggestions for improvement of the chapters. He gave generously of his own time while he was on leave of absence.

I would also like to thank Dr. Fred Clandfield for his friendly encouragement and suggestions, Dr. Alex Hawkins for his detailed critiques of each chapter, and Dr. Henry Hargreaves for supervising the initial stage of the thesis before he went on leave.

To the following go heartfelt thanks for their help in bringing the thesis to completion: Terry Diduch, who typed the hand-written drafts; Gwen Simpson, who typed the final copy; and Rhoda Zuk, who helped to compile the bibliography.

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A Note on the Text

The New Variorum edition is the edition of Romeo and Juliet that has been used throughout this thesis.

For David Garrick's 1748 version of the play, his Dramatic Works (1798), repeated by Gregg in 1969 has been used.

The newest and best edition of Garrick's works, entitled The Plays of David Garrick: Garrick's Adaptations of Shakespeare, edited by Harry William Pedicord and Fredrick Louis Bergmann and published in 1981, was acquired by the University of Alberta Library just as this thesis was being completed. This edition, which contains a number of line variations from the 1969 edition by Gregg, was unfortunately not available for my use.

Introduction

Very little is known about the stage history of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet in Elizabethan times. Writers of the period could have read the story of the two young lovers in The Tragicall Historie of Romeus and Juliet, adapted in 1562 from the Italian by Arthur Brooke; some referred to a dramatic version of the tale written probably in 1594 by William Shakespeare, and quoted scraps of text; but the earliest surviving eye-witness accounts of Romeo and Juliet are ones given after the Restoration. It is one of the ironies of English dramatic history that the greatest period is the least documented. Dramatic criticism, as we know it, did not exist in the age of Shakespeare; it owes its growth to the development of the newspaper and the periodical in the eighteenth century. Plays were regarded as ephemeral things -- as part of the world of entertainment which included bear-baiting and cock fighting; no one thought of writing dramatic notices of these grim sports. Yet, here and there, in the diaries and notebooks, the biographical sketches and pamphlet trivia, comments are found on the drama, although references to specific productions are rare indeed.

That Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet was already popular in 1596, however, is shown by the title page of the first printed copy (Q₁, 1597), probably by actor's memorial reconstruction, which describes the play as "often (with great applause) plaid publicly, by the right Honourable the L. of Hunsdon his Seruants." This company of actors was thus known only between July 1596 and April 1597. The play's popularity, affirmed

by the first Quarto, is attested by the frequent allusions in contemporary literature, from Marston's Scourge of Villany (1598) through John Weaver's Epigrams (1599) and The Return from Parnassus, Part I (?1599), in which a character's misquotation of II.iv.41 is hailed as "Romeo and Juliet," to L. Digges' memorial verses in the first Folio (1623), which declares it "impossible" for "some new strain t' outdo/ Passions of Juliet and Romeo."¹ Both the second, the "good" Quarto (1599) and the third Quarto (1609) give testimony that the play had been "sundry times publiquely acted" by 1609, Q₂ speaking of performances by the "Lord Chamberlain's," and Q₃ referring to performances "at the Globe" by "the Kings Maiesties Seruants." Although no actual record of performances before the Restoration survives, the fact that the play was reprinted four times in Quarto (Q₄, 1622; Q₅, 1637), as well as the evidence afforded by the title pages of these editions, supports the belief that this tragedy held the English stage until the closing of the theatres in 1642.

When the theatres reopened in the Restoration in 1660, Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet was one of the first plays to be revived; the English stage annals, moreover, reveal a nearly unbroken chain of performances for almost four centuries, demonstrating that from the Restoration to the present day the play had retained its firm hold on the English stage. Indeed, next to Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet has been for audiences the most enduringly popular of all Shakespeare's dramas on the English stage.

Although the text of the play has received a fair measure of study from critics, it is surprising to discover that, in light of the

play's consistent popularity on the English stage, little critical attention has been accorded its stage history. Most of what has been written on the play's performance history has been of a general nature: chronicles of notable English stage Romeos and Juliets, and dates and places of famous performances. Very little, however, has been written on how directors and actors through the centuries have interpreted the play. It is the purpose of this thesis, therefore, to examine various changes in interpretation that the play has undergone in four centuries of performance on the English stage and to propose reasons for these variations in interpretation.

Four representative productions of the play from the Restoration to the present day have been chosen for study: David Garrick's at Drury Lane in 1748, Henry Irving's at the Lyceum in 1882, William Poel's at the Royalty in 1905, and Franco Zeffirelli's at the Old Vic in 1960. Both Garrick, in the eighteenth century, and Irving, in the nineteenth century, were the leading theatrical figures of their day, actor-managers who were strongly bound by contemporary theatrical conventions and tastes, but whose pre-eminence also allowed them to lead that taste and therefore to introduce important innovations to their presentations of Romeo and Juliet which markedly influenced many subsequent productions of the play. Their versions of Romeo and Juliet thus became the definitive versions of the play in their own ages. Twentieth century Shakespearean production, by contrast, has been characterized by both an enormous proliferation of performances on the English stage and a great diversity in approach to those presentations. Two major trends, however, have

emerged. Zeffirelli's production, representative of the twentieth-century eclectic attitude in which "anything goes," makes Shakespeare relevant to modern concerns. Poel's production, on the other hand, aims at the complete restoration of Shakespeare's text on the stage and uses that text as the sole authority for interpretation. Both directors have been greatly influential in the presentation of Shakespeare on the twentieth-century stage.

Because the four productions can be viewed generally as reflections of or reactions to the ages in which they are performed, it becomes necessary to examine not only the four productions themselves, but also to place them in a larger, historical framework. Consequently, each chapter of the thesis analyzes not only a particular production of Romeo and Juliet in detail, but also gives a brief historical survey, summarizing any general dramatic currents of the age and any advancements in staging techniques which have affected Shakespeare in performance during that period.

Common to all productions is a discussion of the actor-manager's or director's major ideals for the play, his interpretation of the characters of the titular figures, as well as any excisions made in the text and reasons for them; moreover, some attention is paid to the critical reception of the production and the influence that the director's ideas and stage work have had on successive generations of theatrical taste and actual practice. Because these productions represent four centuries of Shakespearean performance, however, there is great variety in the way the four people have approached the text of

Romeo and Juliet and the manner of presenting this play on the English stage.

Chapter I

David Garrick: Shakespeare Refined

When Charles II came to the English throne in 1660 the London theatres had been closed for about eighteen years -- since the puritans, in 1642, had ordered that actors in all "Stage Plays, Interludes, or other common Plays" were to be "punished as Rogues, according to Law."¹ On August 21, 1660 the new king issued patent letters for the incorporation of two companies of players; by this official act the theatrical interregnum was brought to an end, and the stage, now protected by royal patronage, was safe from the attacks of its puritan enemies.

Londoners who recalled the last performances allowed in the public theatres under Charles I, however, were to find conditions greatly altered in the new theatres, with such innovations as the appearance of women as performers and the employment of "scenes." In former times, says a writer of 1664, the public theatres were "but plain and simple, with no other Scenes, nor Decorations of the Stage, but only old Tapestry, and the Stage strew'd with Rushes, (with their Habits accordingly) whereas ours now for Cost and ornament are arriv'd to the height of Magnificence."² If this, today, seems extravagant praise at least the illusion of drama was greatly enhanced by the addition of movable painted scenery. The public theatres were now also roofed, with expensive seats in the "pit" where once the groundlings had stood; and the apron stage, much less protuberant than before, became merely an

extension beneath a proscenium arch within which much of the action took place. Thus, in these theatres the rudimentary beginnings of the boxed-in stage could be seen; in general, the stage arrangement for this period was a time of transition from the older non scenic "platform" stage to the later "picture" stage with its elaborate scenic effects. It was also during the Restoration that music took a permanent and important place in theatrical performances; the opera was a new, popular entertainment and the song became an inevitable element even in serious plays.

The Restoration therefore gave Londoners public theatres once again and the managers of the new houses very soon gave their audiences Shakespeare. The audiences approved and a number of the dramatist's plays established themselves almost at once in the permanent repertory. Restoration changes in the structure and technical resources of the stage, however, brought into view what seemed to the "fashionable" Restoration theatregoers the antiquated dramatic techniques of earlier playwrights such as Shakespeare who had been able to treat their material much more plastically, even loosely and episodically, than could their successors, who were writing for a stage framed by the proscenium arch and decorated with movable, painted scenery. As soon as scenic machinery and music became routine accessories of the stage, theatrical managers, almost as a point of honour, arranged Shakespeare's dramas to fit the new conditions. The use of scenery may have delighted the eye and helped create dramatic illusion, but it also made frequent changes of place awkward and thus prevented the easy cinematographic flow characteristic of plays performed during Shakespeare's own time. Instead of the rapid tempo made possible by the Elizabethan use of multiple stages, two

levels, and no extraneous scenery, Restoration productions of Shakespeare became cramped and retarded by frequent scene changes, laboriously contrived spectacle and operatic music. Yet the mutation of public taste offered, as the only alternative to Shakespeare's abandonment, the obligation of bestowing on his work every mechanical advantage, every ornament in the latest mode.

Another difference between the two ages soon began to be evident, at least to the more "discerning" theatrical patrons. John Evelyn saw Hamlet in 1661 and liked it himself, but reported in his diary, "Now the old plays began to disgust this refined age, since his Majesty's been so long abroad."³ Great changes in society and theatrical taste had taken place since the publication of the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays in 1623. The theatres of Shakespeare and his contemporaries had enjoyed the patronage of all classes of society from courtier to 'prentice, but the new playhouses tended to attract an audience more homogeneously upper-class and consequently their repertory was subject to the influence of courtly and fashionable taste. The theatres inevitably became theatres of a coterie, interested primarily, though not entirely, in satisfying the taste of a sophisticated few, not of the many.

During the interregnum in England, the classical ideal had been generally adopted in France. Charles Stuart and his court had seen French and Italian plays during their exile abroad and preferred them to the English; so that Charles intended that his playwrights and theatre managements should regard them as models. Largely through the influence of French example and criticism, the English after 1660 inaugurated an

Age of Classicism; consequently, from 1660 onwards classicism in acting, staging and drama was reinforced in its conflict with the native romanticism of English drama, and succeeded in transforming the English stage. Thus, with the Restoration of the stage had come also a new type of drama, with plays having a much more sophisticated veneer than Shakespeare's audiences had been accustomed to, and with classical themes and academic aims entirely alien to the Elizabethan's work. There was now no doubt that Shakespeare and some of the Elizabethans were men of great native genius but unhappily they lacked "art" and had not acquired that refinement of manner demanded in an age of politeness. Their plays, though sufficient for a "rude" and "barbarous" generation, could charm an "understanding" age no more. To be acceptable now they had to be reshaped into conformity with the three unities and other prescriptions of the neo-classic code.⁴ The process of remodelling the elder poets began with the Restoration and continued without abatement for fully a hundred years.

Shakespeare therefore was to be "reformed" not only to make the plays fit the new stages with their scenes, but also to suit the neo-classical tastes of the audience; so that the plays were not merely cut, but also drastically changed. From that time onward, the theatre had a new Shakespeare.

The practice of altering Shakespeare's plays to suit the tastes of the new age began almost as soon as the playhouses opened their doors, and by the beginning of the eighteenth century most of them had been reformed. Romeo and Juliet, one of the first plays to be revived, was no exception. The play, "Wrote by Mr. Shakespeare" was first revived again

on March 1, 1662, shortly after the opening of the first theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. Samuel Pepys, who saw the opening night, had the distinction of being among the last for almost two hundred years to see the play as written by Shakespeare. A man who disliked poetry and romance, Pepys judged it "a play of itself the worst that ever I heard in my life."⁵ Only a very short time later, probably within a few months, an adaptation of Romeo and Juliet appeared, produced by James Howard. Under Howard's hand the play was altered to please those sensitive persons among the public who would wish every story to come to "blissful termination"; consequently, the play was alternately presented as a tragedy and as a tragi-comedy.⁶ In 1680 the play appeared as the altered Caius Marius by Thomas Otway, a version which accommodated the renewed interest in the classics. The play's setting was changed to Republican Rome and the conflict of Marius and "Sylla" took the place of the Montague-Capulet feud in Verona. The two lovers were now Marius Junior and Lavinia, daughter of Sylla's chief supporter, who ordered her to marry Sylla; and their tragedy was interwoven into the larger conflict. The Nurse and a very poor substitute for Mercutio had parts in the play, but there was no equivalent for Tybalt. Betterton played Caius Marius, a far more important character than Montague in Shakespeare; Smith and Mrs. Barry were the lovers; and James Nokes received acclaim as the Nurse. Otway's play superseded both the original and Howard's adaptation and held the stage intermittently for more than sixty years. Romeo and Juliet reopened, however, in 1744, "revised and altered" by Theophilus Cibber. Although announced as "Not acted these hundred years," the play

was far from the original, being a mixture of Otway's Caius Marius and Shakespeare's play, with the added feature of various lines from Shakespeare's The Two Gentlemen of Verona. The play, acted ten times in 1744, proved so popular that, the General Advertiser tells us, distinguished people were crowded out of the boxes into pit and gallery on the first night.⁷

It was David Garrick's version of Romeo and Juliet, however, that proved to be the most enduringly successful production of the play since the Restoration; first performed in 1748, it was immediately popular and received twenty-one performances at Drury Lane that season and two years later it was again revived, this time for nineteen performances.⁸ In the first decades of the eighteenth century over two thousand performances of Shakespeare had been given to London audiences, and the great, generally-known Shakespearean characters, such as Hamlet, Othello and Lear belonged to the permanent repertoire of every distinguished actor. By the middle of the eighteenth century, one man, David Garrick, dominated the English theatrical world. Garrick became the greatest English actor of the century and as manager of Drury Lane, one of only two theatres allowed a license in London, he influenced the entire English theatre world with his ideas. A great admirer of Shakespeare, he did more in his thirty-five years at Drury Lane to popularize the playwright than anybody before him; from 1741 until 1776 he presented over 1400 performances of twenty-seven Shakespeare plays, producing at least ten plays each season.⁹

To the eighteenth century Garrick was "Shakespeare's priest"¹⁰ and little or no distinction was made between the two men: the actor-

manager was received as the dramatist's heir and representative, self-entrusted with the mission of defending his ancestor's glory. "Shakespeare is not more admired for writing his plays," said Walpole, than "Garrick for acting them."¹¹ More than any other man Garrick was responsible for enabling his audience to hear more of Shakespeare's actual lines spoken on the stage than at any time since their original productions.

'Tis my chief wish, my joy, my only plan,
To lose no drop of that immortal man

wrote Garrick in a prologue.¹² Although it was Garrick's constant intention to restore to the eighteenth-century stage as much as possible of Shakespeare's own words, he was subject to the limitations both of his audience's and his own taste. Consequently, alterations were made to the plays that accorded with his own interpretations of how the plays should be acted or that he felt necessary to conform to the tastes of an age which mingled censure with its admiration for the great Elizabethan. Faced, for example, with the gross disregard for the unities in The Winter's Tale, and the very un-Enlightenment manners of The Taming of the Shrew, Garrick salvaged both plays for his audience by creating three-act versions of them.

Thus, when Garrick brought out his version of Romeo and Juliet in 1748 it was his purpose to return to what he considered to be a more authentic Elizabethan text than had been used on the English stage for over a century; and it became his challenge both to restore Shakespeare and yet to fit the play to the mid-eighteenth-century stage. The changes imposed upon Romeo and Juliet by him were largely grounded in the tenets

of neo-classical tragic theory. Although the "rules" had long been under attack and even though the eighteenth century did not slavishly and mechanically apply them to Shakespeare, a pattern of critical belief, approximating what we call neo-classicism, nevertheless exerted an influence upon eighteenth-century playmaking and, consequently, upon the alteration of Shakespeare. The fundamental assumptions behind the "rules" were still largely in force, and in practice plays were judged by their conformity or non-conformity to these prevailing critical standards. Hence tragedies were praised for their excellence of plot construction, for their observance of morality and justice, for the preservation of decorum of character, as well as the decorum of the genre itself -- that is, no mingling of the comic and the tragic.

Garrick's major alterations in Romeo and Juliet were in plot and characterization. In eighteenth-century playwriting generalized characterization became common producing well-marked types rather than idiosyncratic individuals. Subtlety had largely departed but the issues were clearly drawn; the characters tended towards what in the modern view would be considered extremes of "black and white sketches," without shading, without particularizing details.¹³ The neo-classic ideal of decorum became a strong consideration in many of the adaptations of Shakespeare. It was now a common contention that tragedy should move the audience to admiration of the hero, for unless they admired him the efforts of the poet were wasted; as well, not mere terror at the misfortunes of the hero was to be moved, but terror mingled with admiration. The heroic, the admirable and the good, moreover, were

usually seen as the exclusive qualities of persons of high rank, so that the characters of tragedy, and especially the tragic hero, were drawn from the upper reaches of society; and their manners, as a consequence, were to be those of the court. The first way in which decorum manifested itself was in a vigorous preservation of what was regarded as character type. A king must invariably act like a king; likewise, every hero had a set pattern of behavior to follow. Shakespeare had not always adhered to similar conventions: because of his emphasis on character delineation, his use of complexes and motivations that make a person a particular individual, many of his characters showed eccentricities of behavior inconsistent with the basic, more generalized behavior patterns of eighteenth-century dramatic figures.

If the character presentation or the action of a play disturbs a spectator's sense of propriety, whatever the century, his pleasure and belief in the dramatic action are likely to be disturbed. The difference of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable comes in deciding what constitutes a violation of one's sense of propriety. Conformity to character type, a virtue in the eighteenth century, is usually considered a limitation in the twentieth century. As a result many of the departures that seemed flaws to the eighteenth-century spectator, since they made a many-faceted individual of the character, are today counted the happiest proofs of Shakespeare's genius. The orientation of the eighteenth-century audience was moral and social, not psychological; and that moral orientation, deriving from an intense sense of order, gave theatrical spectators a different sense of values from that of modern audiences. The world was to the eighteenth century an ordered though

complex place and audiences, reinforced by a comforting sense of certainty and of absolute values, delighted in contemplating that order. The universal harmony was more easily discerned and the meanings of actions more easily understood if not too many variables were involved. It therefore seemed best not to distract audiences with characters who behaved in unorthodox ways; generalized characters were clearly advantageous. Eighteenth-century dramatists consequently tended to portray the same character types over and over again; the meaning of action was clear when a character behaved as a man of his sort would be expected to behave.

Lacking the appreciation of psychological quirks that Shakespeare possessed, and being unable to realize Shakespeare's characters in their full complexity because of eighteenth-century critical rules, the century could not avoid being disturbed by some of what were regarded as irregularities in the plays. Samuel Johnson, the major literary spokesman of the age, praised Shakespeare's "excellencies," but pointed out that the dramatist had likewise faults "sufficient to obscure and overwhelm any other merit." In Johnson's view Shakespeare's major weakness was that he seemed "to write without any moral purpose" and that he neglected to make the world better.¹⁴ The major function of drama might be entertainment but the theatre was now also a didactic medium for vivid presentation of generally held concepts of socially acceptable behavior; a drama therefore arose in which pathos and delicacy and refined sentiments were accorded a prominent place and where moralizing was given a central position. To David Garrick, tragedy was to be viewed

as the school of virtue, representing the actions, passions, and sufferings of human nature, for the instruction of mankind.

This desire to create idealized character types motivated some of Garrick's changes in Romeo and Juliet. Shakespeare's young lovers had long been regarded as symbols of ideal love, and for this very reason the eighteenth-century adapters of Romeo and Juliet felt that no blemishes should lessen the purity of the pair. In their view the theme of the play concerned not the caprices of love but the peculiar purity of emotion that is sometimes attributed to the young. The characters were therefore altered to conform to that idea. When Garrick first published the play in 1748, he included the following advertisement:

The sudden change of Romeo's love from Rosaline to Juliet was thought by many, at the first revival of the play, to be a blemish in his character; an alteration in that particular has been made more in complaisance to that opinion, than from a conviction that Shakespear, the best judge of human nature, was faulty.¹⁵

Garrick, therefore, had Romeo love Juliet from the outset of the play and made no mention at all of Rosaline; in this alteration Garrick was following Cibber who had already introduced the change to the stage. Romeo's swift transformation from lover of Rosaline to lover of Juliet was changed not because Garrick's audience might feel that such a hasty decision was unrealistic but because the audience preferred Romeo and Juliet to be idealized abstractions of those qualities that were esteemed in lovers. Romeo was given the opportunity to make clear his feelings shortly after his first entrance when, in his conversation with Benvolio, he said:

This love feel I; but such my forward fate,
 That there I love where most I ought to hate.
 Dost thou not laugh, my cousin! — Oh Juliet, Juliet!¹⁶
 (p. 95)

The constancy of Romeo's love to Juliet was also necessary because, as Margaret Barton notes, "a truly romantic hero must only be in love once in a lifetime."¹⁷

Francis Gentleman, who was at various stages of his career an actor, playwright and an editor of dramatic works, had much to say about Garrick's Romeo and Juliet. His contributions can be found mainly in a work he published in 1770, The Dramatic Censor, a series of essays providing a running commentary on many of Shakespeare's plays as they were acted; and in Bell's 1773 theatre edition of the plays, which Gentleman not only edited but supplied with introductions and notes. The text of the plays (twenty-four in all) which Bell printed in his Shakespeare edition was taken from the prompt books used at either Drury Lane or Covent Garden, and thus it provides us, along with Gentleman's notes and comments, an invaluable guide to what the eighteenth-century theatre esteemed or disliked in its Shakespearean productions. In The Dramatic Censor Francis Gentleman approved of Garrick's omission of Rosaline, saying, "We must be of the opinion that the change of affection from Rosaline to Juliet is judiciously omitted, as it certainly served no purpose but throwing an imputation upon Romeo's constancy."¹⁸ In an editorial comment made in Bell's Edition of Shakespeare's Plays, Gentleman went on to remark that "making no mention of Rosaline, but rendering Romeo's love more uniform, is certainly improving upon the original, notwithstanding the caprices of love."¹⁹

It is interesting to note, however, that inconsistencies appeared in the wishes of the eighteenth-century audience. In Act I of Shakespeare's play Romeo confesses to Mercutio that he "dreamt a dream to-night" (I.iv.49). This line then introduces Mercutio's famous "Queen Mab" speech in which he describes the queen of fairyland who visits lovers in their dreams. Francis Gentleman found this aspect of Romeo's character to be a blemish: "A touch of superstitious weakness we find thrown into Romeo's character in the mention of a dream." Garrick, however, kept both Romeo's admission to dreaming and Mercutio's entire "Queen Mab" speech. Gentleman, after condemning the blemish in Romeo's character, went on to approve of Garrick's faithfulness to the original text: ". . . but as it introduces so beautiful a description of the queen of dreams, her equipage and various influence upon various characters, we must rather be pleased than offended."²⁰ The eighteenth century valued Shakespeare's imagination and conceded that even flights of fancy were delightful in the proper circumstances.

In its treatment of love Shakespeare's play encompasses two disparate views. The heterogeneous audience of Shakespeare's own day would have appreciated both the dramatist's treatment of idealistic love, as reverentially expressed in the religious imagery used by the young couple, as well as the contrasting bawdy, down-to-earth view of their sexual attraction. Because of eighteenth-century conventional delicacy and taste in idealized characterization, Garrick had Romeo talk only in such abstract exemplary terms as would befit innocent young love. Any sexual interests were therefore removed from the character. In

Shakespeare's play, for example, Romeo expresses much of the lusty young man's frustrated sexual interest in Rosaline:

she'll not be hit
With Cupid's arrow; she hath Dian's wit,
And in strong proof of chastity well arm'd,
From love's weak childish bow she lives unharm'd
She will not stay the siege of loving terms,
Nor bide the encounter of assailing eyes,
Nor ope her lap to saint-seducing gold.²¹

Garrick removed the double-entendre, changed Romeo's attitude, and gave him a new cause for his frustration; the stars had not befriended him:

she's fair I love:
But knows not of my love, 'twas thro' my eyes
The shaft empiere'd my heart, chance gave the wound,
Which time can never heal: no star befriends me,
To each sad night succeeds a dismal tomorrow,
And still 'tis hopeless love, and endless sorrow.
(p. 95)

In Garrick's version of the play Romeo agreed to go to the Capulet ball not because Rosaline was to be a guest there, but to see Juliet, who would naturally be present:

Let come what may, once more I will behold,
My Juliet's eyes, drink deeper of affection.
(p. 97)

As a result of Garrick's alterations, much of the irony found in Shakespeare's play is missing. Romeo never loves anyone but Juliet. Mercutio and Benvolio are perfectly aware of this, which not only eliminates the irony of their banter at the beginning of the play, but also eliminates the element of fearful secrecy which, from beginning to end, surrounds the love of Romeo and Juliet in Shakespeare. Because Garrick chose to abstract only as much of Shakespeare's characters as he believed was decorous, consistent and appropriate to the roles the

characters played, the complexity of Shakespeare's men and women was lost. The eighteenth-century portrayal of Romeo was summarized by the Dramatic Censor in these generalized terms:

The hero of this piece is vested with very warm passions, with much love, and what in that case may well be expected, little prudence; he fixes his affections upon a particular object, and determines to have her at any rate; the two valuable qualifications of courage and friendship he seems happily possessed of . . . ardent in affection, vehement in rage, poignant in grief.²²

The same journal then happily concluded that Romeo "affords capital talents a fine opportunity of displaying themselves."

Juliet had no previous lover to be eliminated, but Garrick felt that Shakespeare's fourteen-year-old heroine was unrealistically mature. Accordingly, he altered Juliet's age to eighteen, a change that he felt would be more consistent with probability. Capulet thus explained to Paris that his daughter "hath not seen the change of eighteen years" (p. 94). The Dramatic Censor found Garrick's Juliet to be "tender, affectionate and constant; possessed of liberal sentiments and delicate feelings."²³ Several of Juliet's lines in the third act had to be cut to remove allusions to physical love: such knowledge as these lines betrayed seemed inappropriate to the kind of character Garrick believed his audience wanted Juliet to be. In Garrick's play, for example, Juliet says of her unconsummated marriage to Romeo: "Oh I have bought the mansion of a love,/ But not possessed it . . ." (p. 120); she does not continue in Garrick's version as she does in the original: ". . . and though I am sold,/ Not yet enjoyed . . ." (III.ii.27-28). Another of Juliet's speeches in Shakespeare's play is filled with double meaning. The change from maid to wife can be seen in:

O, how my heart abhors
 To hear him named, and cannot come to him,
 To wreak the love I bore my cousin
 Upon his body that hath slaughter'd him!
 (III.v.99-102)

Speeches such as these were excised by Garrick. With all reference to Rosaline deleted and with Juliet's knowledge of and interest in sex removed, "the two lovers were cleansed of any mark that might prevent their complete acceptance as symbols of ideal and idyllic young love."²⁴

Garrick's version of Romeo and Juliet shows a number of structural changes in addition to his alterations in characterization. These changes include scene rearrangement, and a large number of line deletions and additions. Shakespeare's text of the first act is composed of five scenes containing 719 lines. Garrick rearranged scenes, and, with many cuts, turned the material into an act of 451 lines divided into six scenes. To these lines of Shakespeare he added forty-two lines of his own which were necessary either to bridge gaps or to effect transitions for his new arrangement;²⁵ Garrick's purpose here was to gain speed and clarity of movement. The Prologue was considered unnecessary and almost one third of Act I was also cut. With his excisions and rearrangements, Garrick's first act now followed a new order. In scene i he keeps the servants brawling in Verona's streets and has the Prince rebuke both Montague and Capulet. In scene ii Romeo is discussed by the Montagues and Benvolio and, in scene iii, Capulet discusses Juliet with Paris. In scene iv, in a wood near Verona, Mercutio, Benvolio and Romeo meet, information is given concerning the feast to be held that evening at the home of Capulet, Romeo discloses his love for Juliet, and Mercutio

gives his "Queen Mab" speech. In scene v there is talk of marriage and Juliet's infancy by Lady Capulet, the Nurse and Juliet. Finally, the sixth scene presents the ball at Capulet's house where Juliet falls in love with Romeo and learns his identity.

In the first act bawdry among the servants and between Mercutio, Benvolio and Romeo was cut. Edward Taylor, a neo-classic critic of Shakespeare, objected to the inclusion of bawdry on the grounds that it degraded the majesty and dignity of tragedy:

It must be acknowledged that Shakespeare abounds in the true sublime; but it must be allowed that he abounds likewise in the low and vulgar. And who is there, that after soaring on eagle wings to unknown regions and empyreal heights, is not most sensibly mortified to be compelled the next moment to grovel in dirt and ordure.²⁶

By far the most serious charge levelled against Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet in the eighteenth-century acting texts was that the play's tone of tragic intensity in action and incident was all too often destroyed. Many instances in the play were viewed as violent intrusions upon the decorum of tragedy. As far as most neo-classic critics were concerned Shakespeare continually vitiated his tragedy by mingling it with comedy, or with characters or incidents fit only for comedy. Francis Gentleman, for example, expressed his displeasure at the Nurse's loquaciousness in the first act: "The nurse's trifling rhapsody of circumstantial nothingness, which although extremely natural, means nothing but to raise some laughs, which we deem highly disgraceful to the nature, bent and dignity of tragic compositions."²⁷ Samuel Johnson was one of the eighteenth-century critics to offer an aesthetic deference to

Shakespeare's mingling of tragedy and comedy, but even he felt that Shakespeare's comic scenes were not entirely pleasing:

In his comick scenes he is seldom very successful when he engages his characters in reciprocations of smartness and contests of sarcasm; their jests are commonly gross, and their pleasantry licentious; neither his gentlemen nor his ladies have much delicacy, nor are sufficiently distinguished from his clowns by any appearance of refined manners.²⁸

Although deleting some dialogue to make the play more acceptable to his audience, Garrick, on the whole, remained faithful to Shakespeare's major characters. Romeo was still a love-struck youth; Mercutio still told jokes although they were not as sexually suggestive; Tybalt was still hasty and ill-tempered; and Capulet and Montague were still presented as typical Italian fathers. The Nurse remained garrulous in her reminiscences, although she too lost some lines considered to be too bawdy. The fact that Garrick did not excise all dialogue considered indecorous can be seen in Gentleman's horrified reaction to the Nurse's first speech in the play: ". . . indelicacy is very natural to nurses, but why the reformer of this play should have retained swearing by her maidenhead we cannot think."²⁹

It was Garrick's practice in his Shakespearean alterations to increase the roles of the major characters of a play and lessen the roles of the minor characters. In his version of Romeo and Juliet Lady Montague was cut entirely from the play and her few lines were given to her husband; likewise, Lady Capulet's speeches were reduced.³⁰

After the initial two performances of the drama in 1748, a new play notice was published, advertising the play "with a new Masquerade

Dance proper to the Play."³¹ The masquerade scene was obviously added to the play to please the audience with special music, choreography and costumes. A large part of the acting company was involved and the text was cut even further. The verbiage in the first love scene between Romeo and Juliet was shortened; at this point, however, the two main characters had opportunity to reveal their growing youthful love by pantomimic action. In this instance the play was probably cut, like a number of Shakespearean plays performed during the eighteenth century, simply because a shorter playing time was demanded in order to provide room for other spectacles and features on the same bill. Pantomimes, harlequinades and other "shorts" which could show off the scenic art of the stage designer became extremely popular; indeed, by the second decade of the eighteenth century pantomime was the most popular form of theatrical entertainment in England. Margaret Barton points out that in some eighteenth-century plays it became a "struggle between Harlequin and Shakespeare, between pantomime and straight drama."³² Because audiences were demanding an increasing amount of this spectacular and superficial entertainment, and because the theatres themselves had to cater to the all-powerful desires of the general public, a manager was well advised to cut his more serious productions in favour of what was sure to bring money into the house. In Fielding's Tumble-Down Dick (1744) a dialogue takes place between a theatre manager, Mr. Prompter; an actor, Fustian; and Machinist, the stage designer, which, although ironic, aptly illustrates the increasing importance afforded "entr'acte" features during Shakespearean presentations:

Mach. . . . But, Mr. Prompter, I must insist that you cut out a great deal of Othello, if my Pantomime is perform'd with it, or the audience will be pall'd before the entertainment begins.

Prompt. We'll cut the fifth act, Sir, if you please.

Mach. Sir, that's not enough. I'll have the first act cut too.

Fust. Death and the devil! Can I bear this? Shall Shakespeare be mangled to introduce this trumpery?

Prompt. Sir, this gentleman brings more money to the house, than all the poets put together.

Mach. Pugh, pugh, Shakespeare! . . .³³

By adding pantomimic actions between the young lovers in his version of Romeo and Juliet Garrick therefore made concessions to public taste to make the play even more popular, but did not allow the pantomime to take an important position.

The second and third acts of Garrick's plays were kept essentially faithful to the original text of Shakespeare. Two passages at the beginning of the second act in which Mercutio speaks mockingly of Rosaline were deemed "unpardonably gross" and "not fit for readers to peruse or spectators to hear."³⁴ Lines such as the following were therefore excised:

I conjure thee by Rosaline's bright eyes,
 By her high forehead and her scarlet lip,
 By her fine foot, straight leg and quivering thigh,
 And the demesnes that there adjacent lie.
 (II.i.18-21)

The balcony scene, which in Garrick's play was presented as a garden scene, remained as a high point in Act II, but it too suffered loss; of its 189 lines, Garrick cut twenty-six, twenty-two of which were from Romeo's speeches. Lines which displayed anything other than pure idyllic love were omitted. Romeo must "vow" not "swear" and his

reference to being "baptiz'd" under another name was changed lest the Church be offended. Shakespeare's two lines

Call me but love, and I'll be new baptiz'd;
Henceforth I never will be Romeo
(II.ii.50-51)

became

Call me but love, I will forsake my name
And nevermore be Romeo.
(II.ii.37-38)

Also in the interest of decorum the Nurse's teasing of Juliet in II.v. was shortened. Deleted, for example, was

I am the drudge, and toil in your delight;
But you shall bear the burthen soon at night.
(II.v.74-75)

Although Garrick was generally faithful to Shakespeare's text in the second act, he could not resist interpolating comic pantomimic stage business to make II.iv. more entertaining to his audience. Francis Gentleman described Garrick's presentation of the Nurse and Peter bearing Juliet's message to Romeo:

Stage policy, to please the upper regions, generally presents Peter as bearing an enormous fan before his mistress; skipping also and grinning like a baboon; the beating which he gets for not resenting Mercutio's raillery, is a very mean, pantomimical, yet sure motive of laughter.

In the third act the scene between Friar Laurence and Romeo was shortened; Romeo, as a heroic figure, was made to rant less about his banishment and Friar Laurence was quicker to comfort him. Likewise, Juliet hurled fewer imprecations upon Romeo's head for killing Tybalt. For instance, no longer did she cry "O serpent, hid with a flowering face/ Did ever dragon keep so fair a cave?" etc. (III.ii.72-84). In

Garrick's play there was no bedroom scene; the parting of the lovers took place in the garden with little excision.

In Act IV cuts reduced Garrick's text to half the length of the original: Servants, musicians, Capulet, Paris, and the Friar suffered loss because they were minor characters, but nothing vital to the clear movement of the plot was omitted. The neo-classic dictum of unity of action required that not more than one thread of plot should be admitted into a play, and that all episodes not strictly necessary to the design should be rigorously excluded.

It was in the fifth act that Garrick made his major alterations. Friar Laurence, toward the end of Act IV in Shakespeare, asks Juliet's parents and Paris to "prepare/ To follow this fair corpse unto her grave" (IV.v.91-92). In the year 1750, at the opening of the fifth act, an elaborate funeral procession for Juliet was introduced in which appeared the following dirge written by Garrick:

CHORUS

Rise, rise;
Heart-breaking sighs,
The woe-fraught bosom swell;
For sighs alone,
And dismal moan,
Should echo Juliet's knell.

AIR

She's gone -- the sweetest flow'r of May,
That blooming blest our sight;
Those eyes which shone, like breaking day,
Are set in endless night!

CHORUS

Rise, rise! etc.

AIR

She's gone, she's gone, nor leaves behind
So fair a form, so pure a mind;
How could'st thou, Death, at once destroy,
The lover's hope, the Parent's joy?

CHORUS

Rise, rise! etc.

AIR

Thou spotless soul, look down below,
 Our unfeign'd sorrow see;
 Oh give us strength to bear our woe,
 To bear the loss of thee!

- CHORUS

Rise, rise! etc.

(p. 139)

Garrick asked the pre-eminent English musician Dr. William Boyce to compose music to his words, and the dirge, involving at least seven vocal parts, was then sung during the play's performances.³⁶ Many of Shakespeare's original texts have songs in them, testifying that music was already a popular feature in dramatic productions during Elizabethan times. An even greater taste for musical drama affected many of Shakespeare's plays as they appeared on the eighteenth-century stage, and the inclusion of additional interpolated songs was often required to maintain the success of Shakespearean productions.

Garrick's addition of the funeral procession seems to have been forced upon him solely by the news that such a procession and dirge at the rival theatre, Covent Garden, had been instituted. A member of the audience made this statement in his diary: "Both ye houses play'd on ye same day Romeo and Juliet . . . both Houses too added a Scene of Juliet's funeral."³⁷ Thereafter, playbills for performances for both theatres featured not only the Masquerade Scene but also the Funeral Procession and Solemn Dirge.

The circumstances of the introduction of the funeral procession bear witness to the competitive pressures of stage managership. Before 1750 the parts of Romeo and Juliet at Drury Lane were played, under Garrick's direction, by Spranger Barry and Susannah Cibber, but for the

1750-51 season these two actors left Garrick's employ and opened the same play at Covent Garden. Garrick countered by acting the part of Romeo himself with a new actress. The rivalry between the two theatres became fierce and centered upon acting abilities, and Arthur Murphy reports that the public delighted in the rivalry: ladies of the audience stated that Garrick's passion was so fierce that they expected to see him climbing up the balcony, but Barry's voice so winning that any Juliet would surely wish to go down to meet him.³⁸ The veteran actress Susannah Cibber was considered the better of the Juliets, although Miss Bellamy showed amorous rapture and had natural loveliness. The audience tired of the lack of variety, however, and Burnim quotes the following poem which appeared in The Daily Advertiser on October 1, 1750:

'Well, what's tonight?' says angry Ned,
As up from bed he rouses:
'Romeo again!' and shakes his head --
'Ah Pox on both your houses!'³⁹

Mrs. Cibber at Covent Garden tired after the twelfth night and Garrick triumphantly staged a final performance at Drury Lane with Miss Bellamy.

Critical reaction to Garrick's interpolated funeral was mixed. Some contemporary critics pointed out the absurdity of this practice: obviously the spectators could not have the slightest twinge of fear and pity for the corpse which they knew to be on the point of waking as soon as it was laid in the tomb. Arthur Murphy made the following evaluation:

But what end is all this farce and shew to answer? If it be calculated to please the ear and eye only, and not designed to have a proper tragical effect on the mind of the audience, nor contribute to the carrying on or dénouement of the plot, it is absurd and ridiculous.⁴⁰

Francis Gentleman, however, revealed Garrick's purpose in adding the procession and concluded: "Though not absolutely essential, nothing could be better devised than a funeral procession, to render this play thoroughly popular." Gentleman justified his remarks by explaining that "three-fourths of every audience are more capable of enjoying sound and show, than solid sense and poetical imagination."⁴¹ His assessment of the eighteenth-century audience's taste may be sound. Theatre managers seem to have agreed with his opinion for during the eighteenth century an increasing proportion of music and lavish spectacle was introduced into productions. This trend could already be discerned in the first decades of the century, as demonstrated by the following notice which the Daily Post carried in May of 1726, advertising a Drury Lane production of Macbeth

. . . with all Songs, Dances and other Decorations proper to the play; and several additional entertainments. viz. After the 1st Act, the Musette by Y. Rainton and Miss Robinson. After the 2nd, the 8th of Corelli's Concertos; after the 3rd, a Wooden Shoe Dance by Mr. Sandham's Children; after the 4th a Dutch Skipper by Mr. Sandham; after the 5th, La Peirette by Mr. Roger the Peiror and Mrs. Brent.⁴²

Probably the most popular feature of Garrick's play concerned his addition of a seventy-five line death scene in Act V. In Shakespeare's play the star-crossed lovers never have an opportunity to take a final farewell. Otway had introduced to the stage a scene in which Juliet awakens before Romeo dies from the effects of the poison; Cibber had followed suit; and Garrick also decided to include such a scene in his version of the play. Garrick's addition, beginning at V.iii.118, is as follows:

(Drinking the poison)

Rom. Soft! -- she breathes and stirs!

Jul. Where am I? -- Defend me, powers!

Rom. She speaks, she lives, and we shall still be bless'd;

My kind propitious stars o'erpay me now

For all my sorrows past -- Rise, rise, my Juliet,

And from this cave of death, this house of horror,

Quick let me snatch thee to thy Romeo's arms,

There breathe a vital spirit in thy lips,

And call thee back, my soul, to life and love. (Raises her.)

Jul. Bless me! how cold it is! -- Who's there?

Rom. Thy husband;

'Tis thy Romeo, Juliet, rais'd from despair

To joys unutterable! -- Quit, quit this place,

And let us fly together -- (Brings her from the Tomb.)

Jul. Why do you force me so? -- I'll ne'er consent --

My strength may fail me, but my will's unmov'd --

I'll not wed Paris -- Romeo is my husband. --

Rom. Romeo is thy husband; I am that Romeo,

Nor all the opposing powers of earth or man

Shall break our bonds, or tear thee from my heart.

Jul. I know that voice -- Its magic sweetness wakes

My tranced soul -- I now remember well

Each circumstance -- O my lord, my husband! -- (Going to embrace

Dost thou avoid me, Romeo? Let me touch him.)

Thy hand, and taste the cordial of thy lips --

You fright me -- Speak -- O, let me hear some voice

Besides my own, in this drear vault of death,

Or I shall faint -- Support me --

Rom. Oh, I cannot;

I have no strength; but want thy feeble aid. --

Cruel poison!

Jul. Poison! What means my lord? Thy trembling voice,

Pale lips, and swimming eyes, -- Death's in thy face.

Rom. It is indeed, -- I struggle with him now; --

The transports that I felt

To hear thee speak, and see thy opening eyes,

Stopped, for a moment, his impetuous course,

And all my mind was happiness and thee; --

And now the poison rushes through my veins: --

I have not time to tell, --

Fate brought me to this place to take a last,

Last farewell of my love, and with thee die.

Jul. Die? -- Was the friar false?

Rom. I know not that. --

I thought thee dead; distracted at the sight, --

O fatal speed! -- drank poison, -- kiss'd thy lips,

And found within thy arms a precious grave; --

But, in that moment -- O! --

Jul. And did I wake for this!

Rom. My powers are blasted;
 'Twixt death and love I'm torn, I am distracted;
 And death's strongest. -- And must I leave thee, Juliet? --
 O cruel, cursed fate! in sight of Heaven, --
Jul. Thou rav'st; lean on my breast.
Rom. Fathers have flinty hearts, no tears can melt 'em; --
 Nature pleads in vain; -- Children must be wretched.
Jul. O, my breaking heart!
Rom. She is my wife, -- our hearts are twin'd together. --
 Capulet, forbear; -- Paris, loose your hold; --
 Pull not our heart-strings thus; -- they crack, -- they break, --
 O Juliet! Juliet! -- (Dies. Juliet faints on Romeo's body.)
 (pp. 145-146)

In his advertisement to the third edition of the play in 1753, Garrick felt compelled to justify this addition to the work of the dramatist he idolized: he explained that Bandello, from whom he claimed Shakespeare had borrowed the subject for his play, had Juliet awaken before Romeo dies; Shakespeare did not read Italian, having taken the story from French and English translations, "both of which have injudiciously left out this Addition to the Catastrophe," and thus he did not know the ending, to which certainly his better judgment would have given approval.⁴³ From the Restoration onwards, the love element, considered essential to tragedy, had been expanded in most Shakespearean productions.⁴⁴ Garrick, furthermore, felt obliged to compose his own conclusion because Otway's did not possess sufficient "Nature, Terror, and Distress."⁴⁵ Murphy praised Garrick's ending as superior to Otway's because it "rouzes a variety of passions; we are transported with joy, surprise and rapture, and, by a rapid change, we are suddenly overwhelmed with despair, grief, and pity."⁴⁶

The increasing preoccupation with what now seem to be sentimental effects during the first half of the eighteenth century had caused audiences to respond to drama emotionally rather than intellectually.

Their powers of identification with the characters were cultivated to a remarkable degree and it was now the goal of drama to "shock one's sensibility, whether it caused to be 'melted into tenderness the heart of every spectator,' or produced a feeling of terror."⁴⁷ Such a conception of tragedy was indeed far removed from that held in the days of Shakespeare. The interplay of emotions had given way almost entirely to whatever would provoke a feeling of pity in the audience; instead of the varied passions of Elizabethan heroes and heroines, contemporary tragic characters were activated solely by love. The human being in distress had taken the place of the whole man of the Renaissance. The eighteenth-century theatre considered pathetic situations to be useful devices because they demonstrated the goodness of the characters who withstood all trials and because they provided the spectator with an occasion for displaying his own goodness, since to be moved by the sight of virtue in distress was a sign of a properly sensitive and moral nature. Consequently, in Shakespeare's tragedies, mid-eighteenth-century audiences found their chief pleasure in scenes that most readily provoked tears -- the distress of Ophelia, the pitiable reunion of Lear and Cordelia, and the dying kisses of Juliet.

In the last scene of Garrick's version of Romeo and Juliet a splendid opportunity arose for the two main actors to display their greatest acting talents in wringing emotion from the audience. Garrick not only wished to make Shakespeare's tragic force yet more powerful, but also aspired to create for himself an opportunity of playing one of those sensational scenes of passion and death in which he excelled. The

interpolated death scene was, accordingly, elongated with many contortions and groans. Francis Gentleman expressed his delight in Garrick's conclusion to the play: "Criticism could never ever [meet] more melting incidents or expression, than the catastrophe of this piece furnishes. We deem it rather too great a strain for tender sympathy."⁴⁸ Even Garrick's stern opponent MacNamara Morgan acknowledged the pathos of Garrick's interpolated death scene, thus complimenting the actor-manager on his imagination and creativity: "Nothing was ever better calculated to draw tears from an audience The circumstance of Juliet's awakening . . . is perhaps the finest touch of nature in any tragedy ancient or modern."⁴⁹

Because the versions of Cibber and Garrick were the only ones acted with any frequency in the mid-eighteenth century, audiences were unacquainted with the real nature of the Shakespearean ending. Garrick cut 166 lines from the last act, mainly from the parts of Friar Laurence, Paris and those people who appear in the tomb to view the dead lovers. The little-understood lines in which Friar Laurence recounts what he knows of the circumstances that brought on the tragedy were almost entirely excised. Francis Gentleman approved of Garrick's deletion, maintaining that "Shakespeare has given the friar, here, a tedious circumstantial narrative of forty lines; cutting it off to five, is perfectly right, as the catastrophe is sufficiently wrought up."⁵⁰ Explanations by other characters at the end of the play were briefly given, Montague and Capulet became reconciled, and the Prince closed with Garrick's lines:

From private feuds, what dire misfortunes flow,
 Whate'er the cause, the sure effect is WOE.
 (p. 149)

The battle between instruction and pleasure as the chief object of tragedy was never very serious during the eighteenth century; pleasure won with ease. However, moral instruction was regarded as a very important part of tragedy and scarcely any adaptation of Shakespeare failed to point up the moral lesson, or to supply one if Shakespeare had not obliged. For the eighteenth-century audience some very instructive lessons could therefore be drawn from Garrick's version of Romeo and Juliet. Francis Gentleman, in The Dramatic Censor, presented these lessons:

Disobedience in children, in doing what they know is totally against parental inclinations brings a train of perplexities, and produces the most fatal consequences. Parents may learn that family quarrels are not only socially absurd, but pregnant with misery to them and their offspring; they may also perceive that compelling youth in the article of marriage is an unnatural, dangerous exertion of authority; and duellists may infer from Tybalt's fall that the sword of fate hangs suspended by a cobweb-thread over a turbulent disposition.⁵¹

Although the eighteenth century found Romeo and Juliet's scenes "busy and various," its incidents "numerous and important," and its catastrophe "irresistibly affecting," the play was not fully acceptable without alterations to the language that Shakespeare had employed.⁵² After Otway's presentation of the play in 1680, the drama was not presented on the English stage until Cibber's version appeared in 1744. Garrick blamed this long absence on Shakespeare's use of "jingle and quibble, which were always thought the great objection to reviving it." He stated that his design in alteration would be to "clear the original,

as much as possible," from this defeat.⁵³ Garrick lived in an age that admired Shakespeare's imagination but criticized traits attributed to his supposed lack of learning or to the lack of refinement of the late sixteenth century. Romeo and Juliet was compared to a fine garden filled with "some beautiful flowers of genius," but Shakespeare's language had caused the garden to be choked with weeds.⁵⁴ Accordingly, Garrick made those alterations that he felt were necessary to fit the language of the Elizabethan dramatist to eighteenth-century standards of taste. Generally, the changes were intended to make the play more understandable to an eighteenth-century audience, or to make it conform to that audience's taste in tragedy. Garrick's alterations fell into three categories: he omitted quibble (puns and plays on words), he cut a great deal of jingle (rhyme), and he substituted many words and phrases of his own. The century was convinced that excessively figurative language represented a lack of judgment, and that Shakespeare's language was excessively figurative; thus, many alterations were designed to reduce the imagery in the play.

Following Addison's criticisms the pun was now condemned as the lowest form of wit and thought highly inappropriate for serious drama. Samuel Johnson said in the preface to his edition of Shakespeare:

A quibble is to Shakespeare, what luminous vapours are to the traveller; he follows it at all adventures; it is sure to lead him out of his way, and sure to engulf him in the mire. It has some malignant power over his mind, and its fascinations are irresistible.⁵⁵

Garrick, blaming quibbles upon the uncouth nature of Shakespeare's age rather than upon the bard himself, set about eliminating the puns and

plays on words he found in Romeo and Juliet. He omitted all the punning in the opening scene of the play, pruning all but four of the first thirty-two lines. He also excised the extensive passage of wit exchanged by Romeo and Mercutio in the fourth scene of Act II (II.iv.51-97), and in Act III Mercutio's famous pun was cut: "Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a grave man" (III.i.92). In Act II Romeo's reply to the Nurse when she is sent to find him appears in Shakespeare as follows:

I can tell you; but young Romeo will be older when
you have found him than he was when you sought him:
I am the youngest of that name, for fault of a worse.
(II.iv.108-110)

Such passages, said Samuel Johnson, affect "a disproportionate pomp of diction, and a wearisome train of circumlocution."⁵⁶ In Garrick's play these lines became simply "I am the youngest of that name, for fault of a worse" (p. 111).

Garrick's most important cuts of word play occurred in his abbreviating the love scene between Romeo and Juliet at the masquerade ball. In reducing the quibble, however, Garrick lost some pretty love-making which turns upon the word-play concerned with "Saint," "Pilgrim," "Lips," and "Sin." Even Gentleman was forced to comment upon the swiftness of Juliet's falling in love as a result of excision in the scene, but he condemned her character rather than Garrick's excisions: "This masquerade scene is well disposed to give Romeo an opportunity of unfolding himself: but we rather think the lady's catching fire so very suddenly, shows her to be composed of tinder-like material."⁵⁷

The eighteenth century regarded blank verse as the proper medium for tragedy; Shakespeare's occasional use of rhymed lines in his

tragedies therefore posed problems for his adapters. Act-end and sometimes scene-end rhymes were usually retained because they were seen to fulfill a definite purpose; in Romeo and Juliet, however, the play's 498 rhymed lines were abundant enough to cause concern. Garrick proceeded systematically to reduce the number of rhymed lines in the play, retaining scene-end, act-end and even speech-end rhymes for Romeo and Juliet, who were allowed a more "poetic" speech than the other characters.⁵⁸ The revisions centered mainly on those 281 lines of the play that contained consecutive rhyme; the sonnets between Romeo and Juliet were therefore altered. For example, Romeo's sonnet beginning:

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
 It seems she hangs onto the cheek of night
 Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear;
 Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!
 (I.v.41-44)

was altered by Garrick to read:

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
 Her beauty hangs upon the cheek of night,
 Like a rich jewel in an Aethiop's ear;
 The measure done, I'll watch her to her place.
 (p. 101)

In this scene Garrick also altered the sonnet of dialogue between Romeo and Juliet, cutting seven of the lines and leaving only one rhyme. In Shakespeare the sonnet begins as follows:

Romeo: If I profane with my unworthiest hand
 This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this,
 My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
 To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.
 (I.v.91-94)

Garrick's version reads:

Romeo: If I profane with my unworthy hand
 This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this.
 Juliet: Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,

For palm to palm is holy palmer's kiss.
(p. 101)

Injury done to the play because of the cutting of rhyme was not great, inasmuch as Garrick's emendations of rhyming words amount to less than twenty-eight throughout the whole play.⁵⁹ He therefore did not comb through the play to break up all the rhymes, but altered enough to satisfy the average contemporary playgoer.

Shakespeare was often offensive to neo-classical taste in his choice of words, one of the principal reasons being the alleged violation of the dignity of tragedy, a kind of extension of what might be called the doctrine of decorum.⁶⁰ Garrick omitted from Romeo and Juliet various words that seemed unsuited to the elevated nature of tragedy and substituted words that appealed to mid-century rationalism: the Nurse's "dugs" became "breasts," "beast" became "wretch," and "knife" became "steel" or "dagger."

All emotional expressions that might seem excessive were suppressed or toned down. Thus in

These violent delights have violent ends
And in their triumph die, like fire and powder
Which as they kiss consume:

(II.vi.9-11)

Garrick altered "kiss" to "meet." Juliet's cry

Prodigious birth of love it is to me,
That I must love a loathed enemy

(I.v.137-138)

was omitted entirely.

Thus, although the play prospered on the London stage in the eighteenth century on the basis of its emotional impact and drawing power, its text was cut to bring it into some conformity with the

prevailing standards of eighteenth-century criticism. Shakespeare's language, his more elaborate conceits, passages which seemed out of place in tragedy, and speeches which detracted from the decorum of Romeo and Juliet's characters were regularly excised by the eighteenth-century prompt books and acting editions. Francis Gentleman, summarizing Garrick's presentation of Romeo and Juliet, said that the adapted play

. . . has many poetical beauties, expressed in smooth, nervous, agreeable versification, and takes, in several places, tender possession of the passions; it conveys very instructive admonitions, rises by just degrees to a striking conclusion, and must be allowed the candid praise of great merit.⁶¹

Garrick's alterations in plot, characterization and language met the approval of Drury Lane and Covent Garden audiences well into the nineteenth century. From 1748 to 1776 Romeo and Juliet was the most popular tragedy in the two licensed theatres in London, and was second only to The Beggar's Opera (1727) as the most frequently repeated piece of the eighteenth century.⁶² At Drury Lane it missed only one season between 1750 and 1777; and at Covent Garden the play was staged every year from 1750 to 1800 except during 1780, a striking proof of its popularity since no actor of eminence but Barry appeared in it there. The interest of the public carried on for years in the reissuing of three editions (1748, 1750, 1753) of Garrick's adaptation, and a printing every three years thereafter until 1787.⁶³ Garrick's addition of the final death scene appealed to the melodramatic tendency in drama found throughout the nineteenth century, and was used as the final episode in Gounod's opera, where the lovers sing a duet before the curtain falls. For almost a hundred years Garrick's alterations as well as his additions

of the Masquerade Scene, Funeral Procession and Dirge, and Death Scene were used in productions of Romeo and Juliet throughout England.

Even with all its alterations and additions Garrick's was by far the best text of Shakespeare's play which was carried on the English stage from 1680 until the middle of the nineteenth century.⁶⁴ Garrick's pre-eminence did allow him to return more original Shakespeare to the theatre than any of his predecessors, yet the hegemony of the London stage during the eighteenth century meant that the split between stage and printed text was altogether more powerful than in the twentieth-century theatre. Garrick's was usually the most faithful version of Shakespeare that could be seen acted by his audience. On the other hand, fuller texts, which had always been available, not only became more easily accessible to the public, but, through the textual work of Steevens, Warburton, Capell, and Johnson, among others, more faithful. Hence, the division between Shakespeare seen on the stage and the Shakespeare read in the "closet" was actually deeper than it is today. Garrick's interpretations of a part and his alterations of the plays themselves had an authority now unthinkable. The twentieth century has seen both a renewed scholarly concern with the establishment of Shakespeare's text and an unprecedented freedom with that text on the stage and elsewhere. Modern theatre is essentially pluralist in its aesthetic approach; in Garrick's London, by contrast, two major companies dominated serious theatre, and at Drury Lane Garrick's was the definitive Romeo of his period.

Garrick, by his own testimony, was an avid lover of Shakespeare

and was driven, as Thomas Davis, his eighteenth-century biographer says, by a "passionate desire to give the public as much of their admired poet as possible."⁶⁵ Indeed, it is possible to make a case for Garrick as a "restorer" of Shakespeare rather than as an adapter; it is easy to deceive ourselves if we compare Garrick's acting versions of Shakespeare with those of Howard, Otway and Cibber. Garrick is so much closer to Shakespeare that we may be inclined to minimize his departures; but departures they were, and some of them, considerable ones.

Despite Garrick's professed love of Shakespeare he was the most active adapter of the mid-century, and some of his alterations to such plays as Romeo and Juliet may strike a modern reader as "extraordinary acts of vandalism" as John Barnard has indeed termed them.⁶⁶ Even some critics closer in time to the actor-manager's own found his versions of Shakespeare to be mutilations of the original texts. Garrick's public, for the most part, took him at his word that his "only plan" was "to lose no drop of that immortal man," but not Dr. Johnson. When Boswell once argued that Johnson should have mentioned Garrick in his Preface to Shakespeare, on the grounds that Garrick had "brought Shakespeare into notice," the Doctor's gruff rejoinder was, "Sir, to allow that would be to lampoon the age."⁶⁷ Similarly, Charles Lamb, writing in the nineteenth century, long after Garrick's death, said, "I am almost disposed to deny to Garrick the merit of being an admirer of Shakespeare."⁶⁸

Chapter II

Henry Irving: Shakespeare In Sumptuous Garments

During the latter half of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century Shakespeare's plays continued to hold a prominent position on the English stage. In 1882 William Archer, one of the leading theatre critics of the period, made the following evaluation of the playwright's reputation:

Shakespeare is unquestionably the popular dramatist of the day. What other playwright can boast of two five-act plays running simultaneously at the two leading theatres of London?¹ What other playwright is studied so scrupulously or mounted so sumptuously? If he now 'spells ruin' to anyone, it is not to the managers who act him, but to the modern dramatists who have to compete with him.²

Just as David Garrick had dominated the English theatrical world with his Shakespearean productions in the eighteenth century, Henry Irving now exercised that same control in the last decades of the nineteenth century. In 1878 he became manager of the Lyceum theatre in London and in more than twenty years of association with that theatre as manager and principal actor, he presented thirty-seven plays, of which twelve were Shakespeare's and the others were melodramas. All his Shakespearean productions enjoyed long and successful runs, becoming famous for both their increasing use of lavish spectacle and his controversial interpretations of such leading figures as Shylock, Richard III and Romeo. Romeo and Juliet, presented in 1882, was his first elaborate production and its run of 161 performances proved that Irving's

presentation and treatment of the play appealed to a century which built upon and expanded the eighteenth-century taste for the spectacular and the sentimental.

During the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century developments occurred in English theatrical conditions that were to affect Irving's Shakespearean productions. Already in Garrick's time and until 1843, the London theatres were regulated by a patent system in which only two theatres, Drury Lane and Covent Garden, were licensed to perform plays with dialogue which of course included Shakespeare and practically all of English drama. After the lively dramatic activity of the Restoration and much of the eighteenth century, English drama throughout most of the nineteenth century suffered a decline in both the number and quality of new plays offered. Prevented from performing anything more worthwhile, the management of the "minor" theatres presented trivial novelty and spectacle to the public. The common practice now was to present pantomimes or to circumvent the licensing laws by performing farces, melodramas and burlesques, plays in which the dialogue was accompanied by music. Often all these forms of spectacle, together with animal acts, would be presented on the same program. Hence, the theatre often became a kind of variety show.

Larger and less literate audiences than in the past century filled the theatres. In the prologue to Mrs. Inchbald's To Marry or Not to Marry (1805) Mr. Taylor urged the authoress' "anxious hope . . . still to find/ Some useful moral for the feeling mind."³ This might tempt the more genteel playgoer of the eighteenth century, but now most of the writers for the theatre worked for all the emotional and sensational

effects possible. In an adaptation of Oliver Twist, for example, the following treatment of the scene of Nancy's murder shows the taste of both performers and audience in the popular theatre: "Nancy was always dragged round the stage by her hair, and after this effort Sykes always looked up defiantly at the gallery. . . . He was always answered by one loud and fearful curse, yelled by the whole mass."⁴ All the emotional and visceral effects of the popular theatre -- the violence, the macabre, the focusing of strong feeling on the monstrous villain, the audience's emotional response, the mixture of horror and theatrical thrill -- are suggested by this performance and its response. It is a graphic illustration of what was commercial and thus successful during most of the nineteenth century.

Serious dramatists could seldom compete with this kind of theatrical spectacle. Shakespeare could compete with bear-baiting pits next door to the Globe, or the slaughterhouse drama of his Jacobean contemporaries, but not with an audience that was unwilling to listen to long speeches, or wanted a variety show of fast-moving entertainment that startled the eye and did not make great demands on the ear or intellect. Sensational effects therefore moved into the two patent theatres as well, and by the time the patent law was repealed in 1843, the use of these effects had become a part of Shakespearean performances in most theatres.

To accommodate the growing audiences, theatres at the end of the eighteenth century were enlarged, some seating as many as three thousand people. That process of completely isolating the actors from the spectators, which began at the close of the seventeenth century and

gradually cut away the old Restoration stage and its attendant stage-doors, now attained its culmination in that the apron vanished entirely and the picture-frame stage, apt for realistic and spectacular experiments, was established. Percy Fitzgerald, commenting on the new Haymarket, drew attention to a "novel arrangement" introduced by Bancroft:

A rich and elaborate gold border, about two feet broad, after the pattern of a picture frame, is continued all round the proscenium, and carried even below the actor's feet -- there can be no doubt the sense of illusion is increased, and for the reason just given; the actors seem cut off from the domain of prose; there is no borderland or platform in front; and stranger still, the whole has the air of a picture projected on a surface.⁵

Here the picture-frame stage is not only recognized but full awareness of its function and significance is clearly realized.

The enlargement of the theatres created practical problems: soft voices could not be heard; rapid speech could not be understood; and facial expression, subtle gesture and the fine nuances of delivery had to be omitted or exaggerated. Thus the actors were driven into a slow, heavy enunciation, with each phrase marked off by strong pauses. Because the actor and stage had shrunk behind the proscenium, rapport between actor and audience diminished and with that lost rapport went loss of interest in plays depending a great deal on language for their theatrical effect. In conjunction with scenic interest there was an increased emphasis on broad gesture, eye-catching stage action, and clever stage devices. A demand in the theatre therefore arose for the pictorial realization of the word and the scenic recreation of the dramatist's setting. To look at the stage as if it were a picture was by 1850 an

automatic response in audiences and to make performance resemble painting became a habit of managers and technical staff. Acting made great use of eye-catching stylized and sometimes stereotypical gesture, attitude and facial expression, thus pictorializing character and emotional response. The actor was no longer performing far in front of a pictorial background of wings and backshutters, but had retreated behind the proscenium arch and was therefore integrated within a scenic unit.

The nineteenth century framed its stage as a painting would be framed, but as the century progressed nineteenth-century taste also insisted that the content of the frame should be as life-like as possible. Designers like William Capon (1757-1827) responded to the demand by introducing massive three-dimensional pieces into their settings. The pieces were often difficult to move, with the result that frequent delays occurred even within the progress of a single act. Producers attempted to recover the time lost in shifting scenes by drastically cutting the plays. These cuts, together with the inherited excisions of Restoration adapters and the temporary distortions occasioned by a star actor's vanity, often reduced the heroic sweep of the major Shakespearean tragedies to a patchwork of short and ill-connected scenes. The problem increased rather than diminished as time passed. Great star performers emerged such as Charles Kemble, Edmund Kean, William Macready, and Charles Kean, who appeared in crudely abbreviated "acting versions" of the major dramas, heavily mounted in an increasingly illusionistic style.

New developments in historical and archaeological research and the popularity of historical fiction prompted a theatrical response to

the facts of history, a striving after "historical accuracy." Thus audiences were attracted to such presentations as:

A grand Naval Spectacle at Sadler's Wells Theatre, presenting that memorable monument of British Glory, the Siege of Gibraltar; with exact representation of the armament both by Land and Sea, of the combined forces of France and Spain, with real Men of War and Floating Batteries, built and staged by professional men from His Majesty's Dock Yards, and which float in a receptacle containing nearly 8000 cubic feet of real water.⁶

This interest in the past and the recreation of history in painting, poetry, the novel, scholarship, and theatre became one of the most important features of nineteenth-century thought and creative art.

Learning through history was important for the Victorians, as apparent in their response to the Shakespearean productions of Charles Kean as in their appreciation of historical painting. The requirements of historical realism, archaeological accuracy and pictorialization necessitated full and elaborate scenic treatment for Shakespeare's plays, and by the middle of the nineteenth century it was the aim of such managers as Charles Kean to mount the plays of Shakespeare not only with every attraction of appropriate and picturesque scenery, but with a scholarly precision which would make the ages conjured up by the poet's fancy live again before the London public. Kean went so far as to turn his playbills into miniature essays in which he gave the historical background of each play and the details of his archaeological research. Authorities of all kinds were used to ensure a faithful reproduction of what were often inessential details in elaborating the pictures of past ages. Kean appealed oblivious of the fact that Shakespeare busied himself but little with petty accuracy of detail, choosing picturesque

locales for his dramas and then concerning himself only with the development of the dramatic essentials of his themes and the human nature of his characters. That it was Shakespeare's purpose in many of his plays to present as complete a picture as possible of a bygone age was hardly questioned by the mainstream of Victorian theatrical opinion. Kean's spectacles which utilized the most elaborate methods of historical realism determined the main trend in English Shakespearean production for sixty years: this was the tradition inherited by Henry Irving at the Lyceum. At the same time, there seems to have been a contemporaneous interest in a closer adherence to the Elizabethan texts of Shakespeare's plays than had been exercised in the previous century.

Influenced, therefore, by an age which demanded Shakespeare with novelty, Henry Irving presented Romeo and Juliet in 1882. His professed ideals as a producer can be found in this concise statement, which, although it concerns his 1879 production of The Merchant of Venice, is also of relevance to his Romeo and Juliet presentation:

I have endeavoured to avoid hampering the natural action of the piece with any unnecessary embellishment; but have tried not to omit any accessory which might heighten the effects. I have availed myself of every resource at my command, to present the play in a manner acceptable to our audiences.⁷

Irving knew his audience when he remarked that Shakespeare well acted on a bare stage could afford intellectual pleasure, but the enjoyment of the audience listening to the poetry of Shakespeare would be greater if their eyes were charmed as well: "Many are thus brought to listen with pleasure to the noblest works of dramatic art who might otherwise turn away from them as dull and unattractive."⁸ In the short preface to his

acting version of Romeo and Juliet Irving repeated his ideals for this particular play. "In producing this tragedy, I have availed myself of every resource at my command to illustrate without intrusion the Italian warmth, life, and romance of this enthralling love story."⁹

When the curtain opened for the first time on Irving's production, the audience was delighted to see Romeo and Juliet presented on the stage more lavishly than ever before. The play unfolded in a majestic progression of twenty-two different scenes and acts created by the best scene painters of the day. Clement Scott, a contemporary theatre critic, marvelled at the pictorial effect of the production:

Such scenes as these -- the outside of old Capulet's house lighted for the ball, the sunny pictures of Verona in the summer, the marriage chant to Juliet changed into a death dirge, the old lonely street in Mantua, where the Apothecary dwells, the wondrous solid tomb of the Capulets -- are as worthy of close and renewed study as are the pictures in a gallery of paintings.¹⁰

The opening scene revealed the market place in Verona, realistically complete with donkeys and children walking over a sloping bridge. To create the proper atmosphere for the first meeting of Romeo and Juliet, Irving presented the opulence of the Capulet house. The curtain lifted on an elaborate banquet in which Rosaline was seated on a throne of blue and silver flanked by silver draperies and surrounded by scarlet oleanders. Serving men were seen removing peacocks from the table while in the foreground moved richly clad pages. The prominent English musician Sir Julius Benedict had been asked to compose music for this production and as the minuet began Irving exercised to the utmost his mastery of crowds. Clusters of young people moved slowly and rhythmically around the stage, displaying their rich Renaissance brocades

and satins and accompanied by unseen singers who made their own melodious contribution to the dance melodies. Bram Stoker, Irving's business manager and biographer, felt that Irving had approached Romeo and Juliet in the correct manner: "The story . . . demands picturesque setting. For its tragic basis the audience must understand the power and antiquity of the surroundings of each of those unhappy lovers."¹¹

In the balcony scene Juliet was presented on the marble terrace of an ancient palace whose solid pillars towered above her, while below her the garden was covered in the dense foliage of real lilies and trees through which shafts of moonlight shone. To emphasize the contrast in mood that Irving felt was so important in the interpretation of Shakespeare, innovative use was made of modern technological advances in lighting. The scene in which Mercutio was killed, for example, showed the market square and emphasized the glaring white heat of the city. In this scene, when Mercutio described his wound as being "not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a churchdoor" (III.ii.90), he could gesture to either side of him where a fountain and a church had actually been constructed on the stage. Nothing was left out of the picture of Renaissance Italy: an old street in Verona, a street in Mantua, and the ancient apothecary's shop were all there. The tomb scene gave great satisfaction to the audience as Romeo melodramatically dragged the body of Paris down a steep, dark, gloomy staircase and along a gallery to the burial place.

In the preface to his acting edition of the play, Irving defended his extensive use of lavish accessories, employing a similar method of

reasoning to that of Garrick who, over a century earlier, had argued for a final farewell by the lovers. Garrick had stated that Shakespeare did not know the original ending to his source and surely would have used it had he been aware of it. Likewise, Irving argued that Shakespeare would have used lavish accessories if stage conditions had been different:

Such changes as have been made from the ordinary manner of presentation are, I think, justified by the fuller development of our present stage, of the advantages of which the Poet would, doubtless, have freely availed himself had his own opportunities been brought up to the level of our time.¹²

Irving's production moved in a series of separate pictures, whose aim it was to complement action as well as to portray contrasting moods. In her memoirs, Ellen Terry, who played Juliet to Irving's Romeo, points out that Irving once told her his reason for creating a pictorial effect in this play:

Hamlet could be played anywhere on its acting merits. It marches from situation to situation. But Romeo and Juliet proceeds from picture to picture. Every line suggests a picture. It is a dramatic poem rather than a drama, and I mean to treat it from that point of view.¹³

Owen Meredith, a contemporary poet and scholar, concurred with Irving's evaluation of the play, seeing Romeo and Juliet as one of the most poetic but one of the least dramatic of Shakespeare's tragedies. "To us," he said, "its main charm and interest must always be poetic rather than dramatic."¹⁴ Shakespeare had surrounded the two young lovers with a scenery and had invested the romance with a sensuous beauty; Irving had captured on the stage the charm which Meredith felt was the play's "natural poetic climate."

Although the general public flocked to see Irving's production and marvelled at the treatment of the play, some critics were appalled by the importance that Irving had assigned to spectacle. Henry James reviewed the play in The Atlantic Monthly in 1882 and condemned Irving for putting "the cart before the horse."¹⁵ His conclusion about the production was that "the play is not acted; it's costumed." Irving, in his view, had reached the pinnacle of a negative trend found throughout nineteenth-century English drama in attaching too much importance to scenery and decoration; the sublimities of dialogue and characterization had been suffocated by the luxurious scenery and massed crowds. Even Clement Scott was forced to admit that in certain scenes of Irving's production the immortal lovers of Verona had been made subordinate and ineffectual figures. The Capulet ball, for example, was an especially splendid scene but "... it seemed impossible to get action with all this magnificence. The play was forced to stop, whilst the eye travelled from one detail to another." The very beauty of the stage pictures dulled the action itself, and Scott singled out Romeo's farewell in Juliet's chamber as an example of what he meant. "Here we have, if anything, an excess of colour." He found the colours and scenery to be "a trying background for the central figures."¹⁶

It was Henry Irving more than anyone else who helped transform Shakespearean productions into such lavish spectacles; the pictorial trend of the realistic-romantic theatre of the nineteenth century had found in Irving its most significant British exponent. His use of a magnificent series of pictures represents a level in nineteenth-century

pictorial realism beyond which progress without the motion picture would hardly seem possible.

Not only did Irving's version of Romeo and Juliet gain fame for its use of lavish spectacle, but it also received recognition for his unusual interpretation of the play. From the Restoration onwards, Romeo and Juliet had been seen as idealized symbols of young, immortal love. Irving, however, rejected the traditions employed by such actor-writers as Cibber and Garrick, and wished his version of Shakespeare to stand on its own merits. Originality became his goal and he took Shakespeare's text and bent it to his own purposes. "No two people form the same conceptions of character, and therefore it is always advantageous to see an independent and courageous exposition of an original idea," he stated.¹⁷ Irving's emphasis upon individuality, coupled with a plea for liberty of interpretation, appears also in this characteristic declaration: "If a conception is not part of a man's own brain -- if it is not the impulse of his own creative faculty -- then it cannot bear the stamp of individuality without which there can be no true art."¹⁸ Because Irving was a romantic actor, his tragic heroes were frequently eccentrically individual; indeed the dramatic interest largely derived from what Victorian critics called their "idiosyncrasy." Alan Hughes calls it "tragedy of the uncommon man."¹⁹ In his insistence on personal interpretation, Irving magnified the value of personality, maintaining, "There are only two ways of portraying a character on the stage. Either you can try to turn yourself into that person -- which is impossible -- or, and this is the way to act -- you can take that person and turn him into yourself. That is how I do it."²⁰

Both Henry Irving and Ellen Terry had always wanted to appear in Romeo and Juliet; indeed, the roles had become favourites of actors and actresses for over two hundred years. In 1882, however, Irving was forty-four years old and Terry was thirty-five; both were uncomfortably aware that they were more than double the ages of the characters they were portraying. Irving, moreover, with his lean ascetic face, angular gestures, crooked gait, and high nasal voice lacking in flexibility, did not fit the traditional conception of a young Italian lover. His style of acting also did not lend itself to the spontaneity of youth, being characterized by slow deliberate speech accompanied by many pauses and byplay which had been developed in many years of playing parts in melodrama. Irving compensated for his physical defects, however, by attempting to create through a myriad of realistic details a subtle and complex character. The authority of theatrical tradition and the power of the classical repertory were blended with the psychological interpretation and the character details of a new school to produce a completely personal and individualized style of acting. Irving's success as an actor was due partly to the intensity with which he conceived and projected his not always sound but invariably "interesting" characterizations; partly to his striking, almost demonic personality; and partly to his very faults which so fascinated beholders that they came to be accepted almost as trademarks of his excellence.²¹ It was natural that Irving should choose those roles to which his somber character would give most force; in Shakespeare his past success had been with Hamlet and Richard III, and he was at his best in melancholy scenes.

Understandably, Irving's interpretation of Romeo and Juliet took into account his own acting strengths and weaknesses, and his planning, both of his own performance and of the whole production, brought out those features he could best express. Romeo was not presented from the outset as light-hearted, young and spontaneous, but rather as earnest, despairing, tragic, and star-fated. He was not the love-stricken boy but a tragic fool of fortune. Clement Scott, in the Theatre, summarized the lovers as Irving presented them:

We see Romeo and Juliet as the "pair of star-crossed lovers," the victims of adverse destiny, the subjects of our pity . . . not the lad physically beautiful but mentally incomplete, or the silly girl of fifteen of Coleridge . . . but the youth matured and the maiden strengthened into action, the pivots of a tremendous tragedy . . . the fate-haunted examples of vengeance and vindictiveness, who live to suffer for the faults of others and who die "poor sacrifices of our enmity."²²

It was Irving's belief that Shakespeare's play had been wilfully perverted in the eighteenth century, by either the waywardness of David Garrick or the bad taste of the age in which Garrick had lived. Acknowledging in his acting edition his indebtedness to the 1871 Variorum edition of the play by Furness and the editions of the play by Singer (1826) and Dyce (1857),²³ it became Irving's concern to restore a more Elizabethan text of Shakespeare's play to the stage, and to undo what Clement Scott referred to as "the mischief of the eighteenth century under the false guidance of David Garrick."²⁴ Irving's regard for restoration reflected a trend, found throughout the nineteenth century, to return to a more authentic Elizabethan text. John Philip Kemble began a partial restoration at the beginning of the century and as the century progressed audiences had occasion to hear an increasing proportion of

Shakespeare's own words on the English stage. There was still, however, a good deal of rewriting of the dramatist. Kemble's production of 1811 showed the remains of eighteenth-century taste; Romeo's extravagant metaphors of love were eliminated and nearly all rhymes were suppressed. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, most productions of the play had restored Shakespeare's language, a restoration aided by such literary figures as Coleridge, Lamb and Hazlett who considered adapters such as Garrick to be great abusers of Shakespeare.²⁵ Garrick's interpolated funeral procession and dirge, and his farewell scene between the lovers, nonetheless, generally still held the English stage; indeed many actors using Garrick's stage version thought that they were using the original text.

It was Irving's view that past productions had failed to emphasize properly the tragic setting of the story. Garrick had omitted the Prologue and this omission had been made by every English theatrical producer between 1749 and 1882. Because people had been seeing Garrick's acting version on the stage for over a hundred years and had not been reading Shakespeare, they had been misinterpreting the tragic pattern so plainly put forward in the Prologue. Clement Scott described Irving's desire to restore the story of Romeo and Juliet as Shakespeare had written it: "It has been Mr. Irving's ambition to do something of great moment in restoring the fabric destroyed by mutilated versions and corrupted texts. . . . He has striven . . . to get . . . at the soul of Shakespeare."²⁶ Shakespeare in the Prologue had stressed the feud between the two great families resulting in civil strife and had

therefore provided the setting for the tragic jewel: the "piteous overthrows" (1.7) of the "star-crossed lovers" (1.6) who "with their death bury their parents' strife" (1.8). Because this setting had generally been neglected on the stage the story had been exalted "into a region of supernal elevation above common life," a result at variance with the dramatist's intention.²⁷

Irving took away the usual romantic prettiness and stressed a setting of warfare and revenge. In his view the play was no light love poem and no tale springing from the quarrels of two neighbours, but a tragedy stemming from the hatred of two virile races.²⁸ The blood-feud, the ruthless vendetta declared between Montague and Capulet through the generations had infected all Verona. In the first scene of the play a picturesque crowd of citizens and nobles, children and donkeys went peacefully about their business around a fountain in the foreground, while upstage a sloping bridge crossed a walled stream. But peace was an illusion. Under the pretty surface the city was a "hell of vendetta and sordid murder" where tempers boiled over in the hot Mediterranean sun.²⁹ Members of the Capulet faction entered, at first slowly, but coming quicker and quicker until a crowd of them had gathered on one side of the bridge. Then over the bridge came a rush of the Montagues armed with sticks and swords. Bram Stoker relates that "they used to pour in on the scene . . . like a released torrent, and for a few minutes such a scene of fighting was enacted as I have never elsewhere seen on the stage."³⁰ The fight was no aesthetic sword-dance, but a deadly war.

The lovers, as star-crossed, were predestined to calamity and were the innocent victims of a malign, inevitable fate. Ellen Terry

points out that in this production Irving used a "fate tree" to symbolize the destiny hanging over the lovers.³¹ It gloomed over the street along which Romeo went to the ball, reinforcing his dark exit speech:

my mind misgives
Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels.

(I.iv.106-109)

It loomed again over the "dismal heart-chilling street" in Mantua where he heard of Juliet's supposed death and brought poison from the Apothecary. Terry attributed Juliet's swift surrender to a sense of urgency prompted by a "presentiment of sorrow":

O God! I have an ill-divining soul.
Methinks I see thee, now thou art below,
As one dead in the bottom of a tomb.

(III.v.54-56)

Henry Pettitt pointed out that past productions had made the play "charming, effective or pretty, and sometimes dramatic, but only Irving made it tragic."³²

In his acting edition Irving announced that the most important of his restorations was "that of Romeo's unrequited love of Rosaline."³³ Following the example set by Garrick, most subsequent producers had omitted any reference to Rosaline and it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that she was restored to the play. By that time Lady Montague had also been restored, and Juliet was once again presented as fourteen, rather than eighteen.³⁴ Irving saw Rosaline as being essential to the proper understanding of Romeo's temperament, believing that Shakespeare had carefully worked out the first baseless love of Romeo as "a palpable evidence of the subjective nature of the man and his

passion."³⁵ Reacting against the neo-classical view of dramatic characters as ideal types, nineteenth-century critics viewed Shakespeare as the dramatist of the individual, the supreme observer of human nature, whose creations were as complex as they were true to life.³⁶ "To play Shakespeare with any measure of success, it is necessary that the actor shall, above all things, be a student of character," declared Irving. "The end and aim of acting," he further maintained, is "to lay bare to an audience the heart and soul of the character which the actor may attempt to portray."³⁷ To Irving the interpretation of Romeo and Juliet was therefore mainly a matter of determining the character and motives of the hero, whom he treated as a real person with a past as well as a present, and who had psychological causes for his actions. Irving arrived at his interpretation by constructing Romeo's life before the play, ignoring the fact that an audience is shown nothing of Romeo's character before the play begins. A modern critic or director, asked what Romeo and Juliet is about, will usually offer a theme; the actor's alternative is to emphasize the character of Romeo. This was Irving's choice. The central basis of Irving's interpretation is found in the psychological state of the central characters. Victorian criticism and stage tradition, with their concentration upon character, generally assumed that this was the true interpretation, and that only perfect illusion could make it work. Romeo, therefore, ought to be played as a believable case history, and his symptoms delineated as realistically as possible.

Bram Stoker said that in Irving's initial portrayal of Romeo, he managed to convey that "though his mind was to a measure set on love with

a definite object, there was still a sterner possibility of a deeper passion." Irving seemed to show the heart of a young man yearning for all-compelling love, even at the time when "the pale phantom of such a love claimed his errant fancy."³⁸

In the scene of the Capulet ball Irving's aim was to place in the strongest possible light Romeo's sudden transition of affection from Rosaline to Juliet. Edward Russell, the reviewer from Macmillan's Magazine, described it as a transition "from disconsolate yearning and love-famine to the instinctive appropriation and assumption of glowing, mutually responsive passion."³⁹ Instead of incontinently dropping all thought of Rosaline, as the invariable stage usage had been, Irving ventured to display in dumb show to the audience the sudden transference of thought and emotion which must have taken place. Gazing from Rosaline around the room he was struck statuelike by the beauty and charm of an unknown girl. As he stood immobile the love of Rosaline fell unconsciously from him and it was changed into "the glory and glamour" of his new adoration.

Irving found it difficult to portray the impulsive, yet bashful and delicate ardour that tradition had decreed to the young lover. Instead, he sought to portray the extreme intensity of Romeo's sudden passion as he boldly courted Juliet at the Capulet ball and in the balcony scene. Ellen Terry, a frank and receptive Juliet, returned his ardour. The keynote of Irving's Romeo was yearning tremulous worship. Romeo made it clear that he adored his love and only slowly came to realize that he could be adored by her; and when he knew it he almost "sank in the sweetness of it."⁴⁰ In Shakespeare there is a definite

contrast between Romeo's boyish character at the beginning of the play and his more mature attitude towards love in later scenes. In Irving's production this contrast was not stressed. Russell, however, agreed with Irving's unusual interpretation of an aggressive Romeo from the outset of the play, stating that "the explanation lies in the sudden excitement of a new passion."⁴¹

In Act III Irving restored scenes ii and iii in which the young lovers react to Romeo's banishment. Garrick had excised those lines which might portray a "blemish" on the idealized characters that his audience desired. Irving, however, aimed for much more realism. In Act III he wished to show that Romeo's fibre had been weakened through love, and that this momentary weakness had been the cause of Mercutio's death. Likewise, he felt that it was important for the audience to see Romeo sobbing his anguish to the Friar. Garrick had eliminated Romeo's faults; it was now Irving's purpose to emphasize them. The Macmillan's reviewer defended this emphasis, believing that "Shakespeare fully intends us to behold the seamy side of this beautiful love story, and to know that there is a seamy side to it in character as well as in misfortune."⁴²

Another major restoration that Irving aimed for in his production was a return to Shakespeare's own conclusion to the tragedy, deleting Garrick's funeral dirge at the end of Act IV and the seventy-five-line farewell between the two lovers in Act V. It was his view that Garrick had contrived a climax and denouement totally at variance with the dramatist's expressed injunction. As late as 1811, in John Philip Kemble's production, Garrick's interpolated love scene had still been

performed and the funeral dirge was retained until Irving's production. Irving's position in deleting such interpolations was that "truth should remain unalterable, and the true words of Shakespeare be allowed to speak to the human soul."⁴³

Although it was Irving's aim to restore Shakespeare's play, he did not produce a completely restored text. Restoration of the "true text" in the latter part of the nineteenth century did not mean performance of the inviolate text, but only the deletion of all language inserted by earlier "improvers" and performance of as much of the original as time and sexual propriety permitted. A producer was privileged to give as much or as little as he chose of the authentic text, but whatever he gave must be genuine. It had not yet occurred to the majority of producers that probably Shakespeare, as author, was the best judge of what should be acted and that his plays, as written, might be allowed to speak for themselves. The plays were too long to be crowded -- with heavy, unwieldy scenery -- in the allotted three hours of the regulation evening in the theatre. Besides, many of the scenes and speeches seemed uninteresting or unnecessary. Hence, naturally, there were as many acting versions of Shakespeare as there were individual managers to produce his plays. Perhaps the justification for cutting Shakespeare's plays is attempted best by Mary Anderson in her preface to The Winter's Tale (1887):

The following stage-edition of 'A Winter's Tale,' like its various predecessors, may be said to aim at keeping as close to the original play as is compatible with the requirements of the theatre and the no less extracting demands of modern taste. Of the larger excisions it is unnecessary to speak, they are unavoidable; no audience of these days would desire to have 'The Winter's Tale' produced in its entirety.

. . . A literal adhesion to the text as it has been handed down to us would in any case savour of supersition.⁴⁴

As with almost all Shakespearean producers before and after him, Irving felt justified in making a number of cuts. In his acting edition of Romeo and Juliet he referred to his arrangement of the text, claiming that he had "endeavoured to retain all that was compatible with the presentation of the play within a reasonable time."⁴⁵ Time became a major concern because the nature of his spectacular production did not allow for the quick shifting of scenery. Shakespeare had merely used dialogue to indicate a change to a new location and his versatile methods of staging had allowed his plays to be performed continuously. The Elizabethan stage was extremely flexible as regards acting. Action was unlocalized unless the dramatist required a specific location, which was then established by the convention of language. The late Victorian stage, however, was completely inflexible, realism and naturalism requiring that every scene must be localized in terms of time and place. Each scene required a new set and the changes could interrupt the flow of action. The fact that the practice of historical realism and lavish antiquarian display meant long wearisome intervals while heavy sets were changed, and that Shakespeare's text had to be cut and rearranged to make room for all of this did not matter, as audiences were quite prepared to accept the penalties for the sake of the benefits, provided there were sufficient pomp and splendour attached to the latter.

Much time was needed in Irving's production for scenery and set changes; musical interpolations such as a wedding carol to awaken Juliet at the end of Act IV were therefore added. These insertions, common

throughout nineteenth-century drama, could be justified to extend the atmosphere between scenes and to heighten the mood of the play. The production time was also lengthened by added bits of spectacular business as exemplified by the procession of fair bridesmaids to awaken Juliet at the end of Act IV and the melodramatic dragging of Paris' body down the stairs into the Capulet tomb in Act V.⁴⁶ Irving's slow ponderous speech with its lengthening of every syllable, and his emphasis on posture and pantomime to heighten scenes consumed even further time. As a result of Irving's acting style and various interpolations, the subtlety of Shakespeare's intention disappeared and the quick rhythm and music of the poet's words became lost.

Irving's policy was to omit those passages that he felt could be excised without losing continuity in the play. In the first two acts little was omitted. In Act I, he cut a servant's comic speech about the shoemaker and his yard (ii.38-43), believing, as did most producers of the nineteenth century, that comic parts could easily be cut because they were minor parts, and their excision or abridgement would give more time for the major actors to demonstrate their skills on the stage. Star actors in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries demanded that their roles be heightened in importance as much as possible.⁴⁷

The entire sonnet duet between Romeo and Juliet at the Capulet ball was kept (I.iv.90-104), a duet which had been shortened and altered throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries because of its rhyme. In the balcony scene (II.iii.), however, Irving made some excisions to the speeches between the lovers, shortening Romeo's description of the fair Juliet by cutting eight of the twenty-four lines appearing at the

beginning of the scene. Omitted were the lines starting with "... 'tis not to me she speaks" (II.ii.14) in which Romeo describes Juliet's eyes and wishes to be "... a glove upon that hand,/ That I might touch that cheek!" (II.ii.22-23).

The Friar's speech on the medicinal power of herbs in II.iii.1-30 had often been entirely omitted in earlier productions, being deemed unnecessary to the central action of the play. Irving, however, in cutting eight of the thirty lines, retained the majority of the speech. In II.iv. some of the comic lines of the Nurse were cut as she brings Romeo's message to Juliet, including her allusion to Paris as "the properer man" (l.185) and her naive question, "Doth not rosemarie and Romeo begin both with a letter?" (l.187-188).

Larger excisions were made in Acts III, IV and V. Most of the good-natured banter between Benvolio and Mercutio at the beginning of the third act was omitted, and a large excision was also made at the end of III.i., the scene in which Mercutio dies and Romeo is banished. Irving omitted the whole latter part of the scene, cutting sixty lines so that the curtain could effectively be brought down on Romeo's cry "O, I am fortune's fool!" (III.i.129), giving the main character a splendid exit, but at the expense of the rest of the characters. The Prince was denied a second entrance to banish Romeo, Benvolio therefore was unable to recount the skirmish to the Prince, and the Capulets and Montagues were denied the opportunity to show their rage and grief.

In Act IV, the vital moment where the Friar gives Juliet the poison was robbed of its significance by the omission of the very

passages that express the fervour of Juliet's resolve:

O, bid me leap, rather than marry Paris,
From off the battlements of yonder tower, etc.
(IV.i.77-88)

Clement Scott explained that Irving had omitted these lines as anticipating the tomb scene but it was his own belief that the speech was an important forewarning of the oncoming evil, a necessary note in "the harmony so skillfully devised."⁴⁸ This passage marked a turning point in the tragedy at which the girl Juliet becomes a woman. Merely retaining the simple line "Give me, give me! O, tell me not of fear!" (IV.i.121) and omitting the other twelve lines describing Juliet's horrid imaginings, was not enough to describe her mental condition at this juncture.

Shakespeare's Act IV ends with the lamentations of the Capulets upon the discovery of the supposedly dead Juliet, followed by a short comic scene between Peter and the musicians. Irving interpolated a procession of bridesmaids and a wedding carol to the fourth act and omitted the musicians' scene; this enabled him to end the act with a grand tableau in which the Friar urges the Capulets and Paris "To follow this fair corse unto her grave" (IV.v.93).

Bram Stoker relates that the pathos of the play's last act touched Irving to his heart's core and that in speaking the words he wept.⁴⁹ It was Irving's intention, however, noted Russell, to purge the final scene of all the sentimentality of previous productions and effect an ending of simplicity and power.⁵⁰ It was to this very last scene of the play that Irving made his most drastic cuts, omitting 137 consecutive lines. When Juliet had died the curtain closed, while behind it the

sound of an approaching crowd was heard. The curtain opened once more to reveal the lovers imperishably united in a final splendid tableau. Surrounding the bodies of the two lovers were the Capulets, Montagues, Paris, Prince, and Friar Laurence; while a great multitude of silent awestruck citizens carrying blazing red torches thronged the staircase, occupying every point of vantage and from the churchyard, offstage, came voices of friars chanting prayers for the dead. Irving was more interested in the lovers than in the restoration of order in Verona. The really significant compensation which the tragedy offered lay in the growth and self-fulfilment of the lovers. The Prince solemnly joined the hands of the two fathers and, above the distant requiem, closed the play with only a fragment taken from his final speech:

For never was a story of more woe
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.
(V.iii.308-309)

Clement Scott praised Irving's conclusion, judging that the play "ends as Shakespeare intended it to end."⁵¹ William Poel, however, condemned the omissions, calling the conclusion a "mutilation" which he attributed to "the despotism of the actor on the English stage, and consequently to the star system." Irving, in his view, had neglected the importance of the minor characters and had not stressed enough the reconciliation of the two families. He ended his condemnation by asking, "Why open your play with the quarrel of the two houses if you do not intend to show them reconciled?"⁵² Bram Stoker, on the other hand defended Irving's ending by merely commenting, "So much can now be expressed by pictorial effect . . . which in Shakespeare's time had to be expressed in words."⁵³

Austin Brereton wrote that the tableau at the conclusion of the play brought to a close one of the grandest spectacular representations of a Shakespearean play that had ever been presented.⁵⁴ Those in favour of spectacle argued that pictorial recreation of bygone times, together with the beautiful and ornamental additions of fine paintings, rich costumes, and lavishly executed properties, replaced inevitable deficiencies in the imagination of a modern audience no longer content with simplicity of staging, the voice of the actor, and the spoken word. Although Henry Irving, in the opinion of some of his reviewers, achieved his goal of heightening the imagination of the audience in this "enthralling love story," his production of Romeo and Juliet was not termed a success by most critics. He had followed a nineteenth-century trend in restoring the text of Shakespeare, but had somehow missed the essence of the mercurial Romeo. There is no doubt that he had failed to convey the appearance of youthful spontaneity and it is hard to imagine a successful Romeo in whom this is lacking. Even though Clement Scott and a majority of the audience were delighted to see "Shakespeare in sumptuous garments,"⁵⁵ Irving himself knew that his portrayal of Romeo was not successful. His best moments as Romeo were in the "banished" scene and in the Apothecary scene, but he could not capture the youthful exuberance of Shakespeare's character. As he himself later put it: "The most elaborate scenery I ever had was for Romeo and Juliet, but as I was not the man to play Romeo the scenery could not make it a success. It never does -- it only helps the actor."⁵⁶ George Bernard Shaw conducted a long war against Irving, claiming that Irving couldn't play

Shakespeare's characters but only versions of himself and that he used Shakespeare's texts as mere quarries for the makings of original romantic dramas in which to exhibit characters of his own creation. Reviewing a Lyceum production of Cymbeline Shaw observed: "A prodigious deal of nonsense has been written about Sir Henry's conception of this, that and the other Shakespearean character. The truth is that he has never in his life conceived or interpreted the characters of any author except himself."⁵⁷

In spite of the fact that very few critics praised Irving's acting in Romeo and Juliet, the production ran to 161 performances, a fact that amazed Henry James: "As it happens, the play has thriven mightily, and though people are sadly bewildered by what they see and hear in it, they appear to recommend the performance to their friends."⁵⁸ It is not difficult to understand why Irving's lavish pictorial productions were popular: Shaw as well as James gave Irving credit for achieving great visual beauty in his productions, and the late nineteenth century was rich in visual arts in England as well as on the continent. The popularity of Irving's approach to characterization may seem more difficult to comprehend but, as Edward Moore notes, Irving's success can be understood when one reflects on what the literary critics were doing with Shakespeare at this time. This was the great age of "character" analysis -- volume after volume analyzing the characters of the plays as if they were real people, a tradition early climaxed in its absurdity by Mary Cowden Clarke's Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines (3 vols., 1851-52), and later climaxed brilliantly by A. C. Bradley's Shakespearean Tragedy (1904). "The age of the great novel of character was the age of

criticism by character analysis, and was the great age of character acting," concludes Moore.⁵⁹

There is no question that as a renderer of idiosyncratic character on stage Irving was superb. For all his inability to read verse, Irving was sensationally successful in certain Shakespearean parts and the reason certainly must be found in his meeting the tastes of the age by giving his strong personality the real meat of great parts to work upon, by applying intellectualized character methods to traditional roles, and by filling in naturalistic by-play between the lines he could not read properly. As Edward West rightly points out, Irving succeeded in those parts to which he could apply most surely his melodramatic and character acting technique: Richard III, Iago, Shylock; he failed most conspicuously in those where sound elocution and a heroic bearing were indispensable: Macbeth, Othello, Romeo.⁶⁰

Chapter III

William Poel: The Bard Restored

In 1902 Henry Irving retired from the English stage and the Kemble-Kean-Irving tradition of spectacle was continued by the Shakespearean producer Herbert Beerbohm Tree who, during the Edwardian period, tried to out-do his predecessors with a series of sumptuous realistic presentations. Irving shared with Kean and Tree the educational objectives of historical recreation in Shakespearean production although not with the ardour of these two, being commended, on the whole, for his restraint of spectacle and its harmonious relation to both play and acting performance. He had integrated the actor into the scenic environment by compositionally subordinating the intensity of the picture to the visual prominence of the actor, each composition therefore having its focal point on the principal actor. In doing so, Irving was able to place the character amidst his scenic milieu without sacrificing the human values of the drama or the histrionic values of the performance. Martin-Harvey, a lifelong admirer of Irving's scenic style, contrasted Irving's technique with that of productions which were excessively archaeological:

This "archaeological method" of production . . . has a serious drawback -- a play itself is sometimes buried beneath a mountain of antiquarian detail. This was never the case with the Irving productions, for he was a master of "tone" (painters will know what I mean), and though he would spend months of research over correct historical detail, he could, with his feelings for "tone," reduce all this detail to a mere background -- a subtle gift denied to those who followed or imitated his method. . . .¹

Tree further developed Irving's pictorial romanticism but was considered not as fine an actor as Irving and was frequently accused of excessive scenic elaboration; his productions often concealed Shakespeare under a mountain of carefully conceived but essentially irrelevant effects. For Anthony and Cleopatra he actually built "the barge she sat in" with its purple sails, golden poop, and silver oars, and moved it onto the stage. He loved tricky business, tableaux and dumb shows. In King John he staged the signing of Magna Carta, which Shakespeare never thought of. In A Midsummer Night's Dream real rabbits nibbled the grass of the floorcloth. Tree also often "helped" Shakespeare along with music. The actress who played Oberon, for example, not only spoke the passage beginning "I know a bank where the wild thyme blows" but then sang it. At Hamlet's death his soul was wafted upward by an angelic chorus singing him to his rest.

It was Tree's belief that the public was not interested in the plays of Shakespeare except as vehicles for providing an exciting star performance and that Shakespeare, in his words, could "not be made tolerable to any large section of the play-going public without the plethora of scenic spectacle and gorgeous costumes which the student regards as superfluous and inappropriate."² Tree felt justified in drawing such a conclusion by looking at what he called the "brutal but unanswerable logic of figures"; even relatively unpopular plays such as King John drew audiences of 170,000 when he produced them.³ Thus it was under Tree's guidance that "spectacular" Shakespeare moved into its most opulent and final phase of the English stage. He had modified an existing language of scenography and consequently had explored that

language's limits; except in the cinema, Shakespeare as historical fact or as pictorial illustration would hardly survive the 1914-18 war.

Although the richly upholstered versions of Shakespeare generally delighted the masses, there was a growing number of critics who expressed contempt for these elaborate productions. Shakespearean performance in the late Victorian period became a battleground between supporters and opponents of the spectacular style, a territory contested with particular bitterness toward the end of the nineteenth century and during the reign of Edward VII. Clement Scott, who had praised Irving's production of Romeo and Juliet, found that subsequent producers were carrying the tradition too far. He criticized an 1884 version of the play in which "silks and satins are preferred to interpretation" and lamented that because producers were overdoing spectacle, Shakespeare's poetry was suffering. It seemed to him that the entire production was sacrificed to "the harvest of the eye" and that acting was currently being made more and more subordinate to mere scenic success:

There are plenty of people to tell us . . . what kind of couch wooed [Juliet] to sleep; dozens of authorities as to where certain pines or orange-trees grew in Verona . . . but apparently not one who can instruct the younger generation how to deliver the Queen Mab speech, not a human being who can persuade a popular actress that the love of Juliet is something superior to that of Mary Jane flirting over the garden wall.

William Archer saw the miracles of modern mounting and stage-management as the result of an inevitable tendency and good in their own way: as the dramatic stage had learned from the lyric stage the secrets of movable scenery and mechanism, so the poetic drama was now borrowing from melodrama and pantomime the methods of realism and spectacle. Archer

also felt that producers were "overdoing it, indulging in expense for its own sake, and subordinating artistic effect to mere ostentation."⁵ Shakespeare, he concluded, was being "horribly maltreated" on the modern commercial stage; he had scarcely seen a single production in which expense did not predominate over intelligence, while the reasonable integrity and logic of the narrative had to yield to the "convenience of the scene-painter and the machinist."⁶ The Academy had long criticized the methods of such producers as Tree and delivered the following attack upon one of Tree's most popular productions:

Mr. Tree's Julius Caesar is a grievous insult to Shakespeare. . . . What do the playgoing public want? Do they go to Her Majesty's to see Shakespeare's Julius Caesar or to see Mr. Tree? If the former, then the present performance is an unqualified failure.

Such condemnations were well justified at the end of the nineteenth century. To accommodate the public's taste for spectacle and its demand to see as much as possible of the star during a performance, producers were ruthless with Shakespeare's texts. Often more than a third of a play was dispensed with; what remained, however, took well over three hours to perform. Productions had become cluttered with interpolated silent business, often to bridge gaps left by cut lines. A typical presentation of Shakespeare included at least three intervals, and as much as forty-five minutes was used in changing scenery, the long waits between scenes being filled in by actors taking calls and by orchestral interludes.

Still more damaging to Shakespeare's texts than the cuts were the rearrangements of the texts made in order to minimize the number of times

the scenery had to be changed. In versions of The Merchant of Venice, for example, it was not unusual to play all the early Venetian scenes consecutively; then the Belmont scenes were grouped together and played one after the other. In spite of the fact that much of the play was thus reduced to mere absurdity, this arrangement was for many years regarded as the standard acting text. In Augustin Daly's adaptation of Twelfth Night, the performance started with the first scene of the second act, followed by the second scene of the first act; this rearrangement allowed Daly to get the seacoast scene out of the way and gave him the added advantage of allowing the star to enter after the audience was seated.

Throughout the nineteenth century, however, a small school of thought persistently argued that plain ungarnished productions of Shakespeare should be presented on the stage. The first step in this direction was taken by Benjamin Webster, who in 1844, in an isolated experiment, presented The Taming of the Shrew at the Haymarket in two hours with no vestige of scenery and no intervals. Between 1843 and 1879 Samuel Phelps produced thirty-one of Shakespeare's plays at Sadler's Wells with simple settings and a concern to follow Shakespeare's texts, followed, in the latter part of the century, by Frank Benson, who formed a company to present Shakespeare with a minimum of scenery and accessories. Practical considerations were partly responsible for these simple productions: Phelps had no money for elaborate presentations and Benson had worked mainly with a touring company, thus necessitating simple settings. It was Benson who in 1899 produced Hamlet in its entirety for the first time since Shakespeare's day, playing the first half of his five-hour production at a matinee, the rest in the evening.

The fact that textual fidelity in Shakespeare's plays was still an unusual occurrence can be seen by George Bernard Shaw's reaction to the 1897 Hamlet production of Forbes-Robertson, the first producer to bring Fortinbras back into the final scene of Hamlet instead of dropping the curtain on "The rest is silence":

The Forbes-Robertson Hamlet at the Lyceum is, very unexpectedly at that address, really not at all unlike Shakespeare's play of the same name. I am quite certain I saw Reynaldo in it for a moment; and possibly I may have seen Voltimand and Cornelius; but just as the time for their scene arrived, my eye fell on the word "Fortinbras" in the programme, which so amazed me that I hardly know what I saw for the next ten minutes.

From the late 1870's onward, it was the rebellious voice of William Poel that provided the best sustained opposition to the spectacular presentations of such producers as Henry Irving and Beerbohm Tree. Poel's view of the standard Shakespeare productions of his time may be gauged from his sarcastic advice to any manager contemplating a Bardic revival:

Choose your play and be sure to note closely in what country the incidents took place. Having done this, send artists to the locality to make sketches of the country, of its streets, its houses, its landscapes, of its people, and of their costumes. . . . Then, when you have collected at vast expense, labour and research, this interesting information about a country of which Shakespeare was possibly entirely ignorant, thrust all your extraneous knowledge into your representation, whether it fit the context or not; let it justify the rearrangement of the play, the crowding of your stage with supergumaries, the addition of incidental songs and glees. . . .

Poel admired the rich pictorial effects achieved by Irving at the Lyceum and by Tree at His Majesty's, but maintained that they were irrelevant to the imagery of Shakespeare's plays and destructive of their rhythm.

Shakespeare's poetry was obviously suffering in spectacular production. A change was needed in the attitudes of producers and actors who had to realize that their only business was to be loyal to the author and to interpret Shakespeare according to what were thought to be his intentions and not according to the theatrical fashions of the time. He stressed that if Shakespeare's plays were given on the stage in their entirety with the simplicity and rapidity with which they were acted in his own day, "it would limit the endless experiments, mutilations and profitless discussions that every revival of them occasions."¹⁰ Poel was to become the forerunner of a group of producers who reacted against the lavish spectacles that had characterized Shakespearean production from the late eighteenth century and attempted to return both to the simple style of production that Poel believed Shakespeare had used and to a complete restoration of the dramatist's text. In 1905, twenty-three years after Irving's production of Romeo and Juliet, Poel presented the play at the Royalty Theatre in London. Although only four performances of the play would be given to very small audiences in a non-commercial venture, the production included a number of innovations too startling to be ignored. These innovations were the practical outcome of more than twenty-five years of thought about and criticism of past Shakespearean productions.

That David Garrick and Henry Irving had been innovators in their Shakespearean productions is certain, yet it is equally sure that their work largely found its basis in the efforts of their predecessors. William Poel can be sharply distinguished from these two earlier producers in that his work took the form of a strong reaction against the theatrical conventions that had largely come about because of Garrick's

and Irving's influences. Far more self aware and critically conscious than either Garrick or Irving, Poel started with his own theoretical framework of well-conceived ideas and theories. He was much more theoretically based than most people in the theatre before him in that his practice was rooted in much background thought and production theories. Neither Garrick nor Irving was anything like so impelled, as was Poel, by a body of critical presuppositions and dramatic theories that were to be tried and tested by practical stage experimentation. In this respect Poel, although already formulating ideas more than two decades before the turn of the century, can very much be considered a twentieth-century figure. In Drama From Ibsen to Brecht Raymond Williams concludes his analysis of twentieth-century drama by stating that "this century of new drama is directly and indirectly self conscious; critically aware of its own problems and forms. Very few modern dramatists, whose work has survived their immediate place and time, have failed to write critically about dramatic form and the theatre."¹¹ This can also be said about many of the more important modern theatre practitioners.

Poel's efforts were comparable to those of other late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century innovators who expressed dissatisfaction with existing theatrical conditions or dramatic forms and set out to change them. Constantin Stanislavski, for example, explains in My Life in Art his rebellion against existing conventions on the Russian stage in 1898:

The founding of our new Moscow Art and Popular Theatre was in the nature of a revolution. We protested against the customary manner of acting, against theatricality, against bathos, against declamation, against the bad manner of

production, against the habitual scenery, against the star system which spoiled the ensemble, against the light and farcical repertoire which was being cultivated on the Russian stage at that time. . . . Like all revolutionists we broke the old and exaggerated the new . . . we sought for inner truth, for the truth of feeling and experience.¹²

Similarly, J.M. Synge and W.B. Yeats, in Ireland, protested against the lack of poetic drama on the contemporary stage. Synge said that the naturalistic drama of Ibsen and Zola that had become influential dealt with "the reality of life in joyless and pallid words." It was his contention that "in a good play every speech should be as fully flavoured as a nut or apple, and such speeches cannot be written by anyone who works among people who have shut their lips on poetry."¹³ Synge then proceeded to base the language of his own plays on the idiom of a rural Irish people whose speech is naturally poetic, both in imagery and rhythm. It was the thesis of W.B. Yeats that "if one has not beautiful or powerful speech, one has not . . . great literature."¹⁴ His goal, then, was to write poetic drama in which, like drama of centuries past, "there is much lyric feeling and at times a lyric measure . . . wrought into the dialogue."¹⁵

"As always, criticism has preceded and fostered creation," says Mrs. Q.D. Leavis of the efforts of the Brontës in the mid-nineteenth century to write novels which would not merely give a surface imitation of life, but which would be true to the whole woman and convey a sense of life's springs and undercurrents.¹⁶ William Poel, in his approach to the theatre, was also, at first, critical rather than creative; archetypal of the twentieth-century reformer, the mode of his own creativeness would declare itself later on. As a young man, in the late 1870's, he wanted

to find out what the theatre was really like, he wanted to discover all he could about acting and, above all, he wanted to study Shakespeare; he therefore tried every sort of odd job behind the curtain and acted a wide variety of parts. A general criticism about Irving's powers was already given by him in 1877 after he saw the actor-manager as Richard III at the Lyceum. "He appears to aim at creating an effect by working his scene up to a striking picture upon which the curtain may fall," complained Poel. "This is a modern practice that I much dislike as it is sensational and stagey."¹⁷

In 1878 Poel went on tour in the provinces, picking up an audience wherever he could and giving recitals from Shakespeare, Sheridan and other classical playwrights. — A year later, having familiarized himself with the plays he intended one day to produce, he proceeded to form a small company of "professional ladies and gentlemen" who gave scenes from such Shakespearean plays as Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear, and Romeo and Juliet. The very simple conditions of these performances threw the actors back upon the text and Poel himself was forced to compare the acting editions of Shakespeare then in use with the original versions of the plays. He was made to realize how much had intervened since these had left the hands of the Elizabethan stage manager — or whoever had assumed such a role. It was not merely a question of cuts or traditional "business"; it was also a question of literary editors preparing a text for publication, setting up their own system of punctuation, and arranging their own division of the plays into acts and scenes. Poel's conclusion was that contemporary Shakespearean production bore little resemblance to that found in Elizabethan times. If a performance was to

be given as Shakespeare might have seen it, it was essential, first, to establish an authentic text; to go back as close as possible to the original representation. It was also imperative to return to Elizabethan staging conditions.

Poel became a man with a vision whose views never changed throughout his working lifetime. He assisted regularly at the discussions of the New Shakspere Society, sometimes reading a paper himself; he wrote constantly to the newspapers; and he lectured whenever anyone would offer him a platform. Slowly, in the face of mounting incredulity, his views became known. His beliefs, applied to the Shakespearean plays he chose to interpret, are summarized in his two volumes of collected papers, Shakespeare in the Theatre (1913) and Monthly Letters (1929), and are elaborated in the personal correspondence and journalistic activity of a lifetime.¹⁸

Poel's work, although based on theory, was far more than theoretical. Because he believed that the methods of Shakespearean production then triumphantly in vogue were totally and radically wrong, and because he was himself a radical, he decided to set about putting them right. "A decision of this kind," says Robert Speaight, Poel's biographer, "is always heroic. The artist must turn his back on the easy accommodations of compromise."¹⁹ Founding an Elizabethan Reading Society, Poel gave a directed reading of Hamlet in 1887 and followed that by performances of a series of Elizabethan plays including works not only by Shakespeare but also by such playwrights as Marlowe, Webster, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ford, and Jonson -- truly a remarkable series of

experiments. For a further ten years, from 1895 to 1905, he was able to express his ideas more fully through the activities of the Elizabethan Stage Society whose productions gained a good deal of critical attention, favourable and unfavourable.

When Poel presented Romeo and Juliet in May of 1905, Beerbohm Tree had produced, just one month earlier, his first Shakespearean Festival, an elaborately mounted and heavily abridged series of Shakespearean plays that delighted the masses.²⁰ The general public hailed every new refinement of realism and every further elaboration of spectacle with almost unqualified delight. It was in tune with the visual temper of the age; opposing criticism was not. Poel and a small number of dissenting critics complained that an overdone emphasis on realism in production rendered audiences mentally passive and anaesthetised the imagination. Poel's intention was to force the audience's attention away from visual delights; to fulfil that aim he presented Romeo and Juliet with no scenery, concentrating his efforts instead on making Shakespeare's poetry come alive to the audience. The public, unaccustomed to this radical change, stayed away.²¹ Even the Academy which had long urged a return to simplicity, cautiously termed the production "intelligent" and "adequate" but intimated that Poel had gone too far in a return to austerity.²² Poel, however, was a true reformer and was undeterred; he knew that the conservative public would not immediately tolerate a new thing but maintained that "no public demands what is not offered to it. Before demand can create supply, a sample of the new ware must be shown."²³

It became Poel's aim in his productions to restore rather than to invent: accordingly, Romeo and Juliet was presented with the goals of an unabridged text, a simplified setting, quicker pace, and none of the cluttering business that disfigured contemporary presentations. The main thesis that underpinned Poel's practice was that every play was written by Shakespeare with a particular form of theatre and a particular style of production in mind. He was convinced that Shakespeare and his fellow-Elizabethans could not adequately be contained within the limits of the proscenium stage; that the intervals imposed by the accessories of realistic scenery completely destroyed the vital speed and continuity of the action, broke the tension when it was essential to preserve it, distorted the fundamental dramatic structure, and made savage mutilation of the text a necessity.

Encouraged by the claims of contemporary scholars that the study of Elizabethan drama demanded a study of the Elizabethan stage, a movement gathered support to perform Shakespeare on platforms either chosen for their likeness to the theatre of his day (as provided by the Inns of Court or Halls of the Livery Companies) or reconstructed within modern buildings for this purpose. The same tendency toward realism which encouraged the elaborately spectacular productions of Shakespeare's plays was responsible for experimentation in the highly conventional manner of Elizabethan staging. Producers such as Charles Kean and Henry Irving had used the realistic method of making Lear look like an ancient British monarch. Others, employing an identical method, demanded that Shakespeare's stage be reproduced in all its exactitude and his

characters be costumed as they might have appeared in the original productions. This was the type of historical realism sponsored and guided by William Poel.

The Elizabethan Stage Society was founded in 1894 to give practical effect to the principle that Shakespeare should be accorded the stage architecture for which he designed his plays. When later asked why he had created the Society, Poel replied:

I am really a modernist. My original aim was just to find out some means of acting Shakespeare naturally and appealingly from the full text as in a modern drama. I found that for this the platform stage was necessary and also some suggestions of the spirit and manners of the time.²⁴

Poel carefully studied the work of W.J. Lawrence and the other scholars who were beginning to reveal the true nature of the Elizabethan playhouses and he examined the evidence afforded by the early Shakespearean texts. It became his judgment that the Shakespearean plays which were presented to audiences in the nineteenth century bore little trace of the swift continuous rhythm found on the Elizabethan stage. Shakespeare, he concluded, could only be played effectively on the kind of stage for which he wrote.

Aided by a sketch of the Swan Theatre which had been found in 1888, Poel set out to reproduce as far as was physically possible all the conditions that contemporary scholarship believed to have governed the performances of Shakespeare's plays in his own theatre and time.²⁵ Such experiments could not have been conducted before this time, there having been earlier only a slight understanding of the true features of the Elizabethan theatre. Not having the funds to rid himself of the

proscenium, Poel put the Elizabethan two-levelled architectural set with an inner stage behind the proscenium arch and created a wide and projecting platform stage over the orchestra pit in front of the proscenium. He also attempted to recreate several Elizabethan theatrical conventions: dressing the actors in Elizabethan-style garments to reflect Shakespeare's own day rather than the historical epoch of the dramatic action; using costumed pages to draw the curtains of the inner stage and to arrange properties and furniture; and employing an on-stage audience to emphasize the audience-actor relationships of the Elizabethans.

Poel wished to recreate the bareness of that stage which had proved to be a challenge to the dramatist and spectator alike. It was not readily conceivable that Shakespeare would enjoy having his poetical descriptions superseded by the obtrusive art of the scene-painter; the poet, he stressed, was his own scene-painter and electrician. It was primarily on an uncluttered Elizabethan stage that the gifts of the poet were to be understood by the audience to the full and that the audience, therefore undistracted by "outward decorations and subordinate details,"²⁶ could give its full attention to the poetry. Poel and a small number argued that spectacle suffocated the imagination rather than nourished it, that it distracted attention from the actor and the spoken word, and that a gorgeous picture was an inadequate substitute for the skills of the actor and the dramatist. It was Poel's belief that a modern Shakespearean producer could not make the same demands on an audience to concentrate its attention on the players and their speech without there being a simple uncluttered Elizabethan stage which allowed

that. In the old playhouse, he explained, the playgoer went first to hear and then to see; in the modern playhouse he went first to see and secondarily to hear.²⁷ Consequently, the marvelous stage-craft of Shakespeare had become lost on the modern stage. Thus, concluded Poel, the construction of Shakespeare's plays, freely flowing, unconfined by act divisions, was incomprehensible without reference to the stage for which he wrote. Although Shakespeare "had indeed written for all time, he had not written out of time, that as Shakespeare had seen the world through Elizabethan eyes, so modern producers must recover that vision if they wished to do him justice."²⁸ Instead of endeavouring to adapt him, Poel urged producers to bring "our own minds within reach of those influences from which the Elizabethan playgoer undoubtedly obtained the greatest enjoyment."²⁹

Initial reaction to Poel's innovative method of staging Shakespeare was generally severe. The Times criticized him for isolating Shakespeare from ever-lasting life and depriving him of his classic virtue of adaptability to changing conditions; Mr. Poel apparently wished to keep Shakespeare dispossessed of all advantages.³⁰ William Archer admitted that Shakespeare had been grossly maltreated by the scene-painter but censured Poel for not refining a living art. Shakespeare presented in this manner was only for the "dilettante and the enthusiast."³¹ Archer also condemned Poel's insistence that only Elizabethan dress should be used for Shakespearean productions. Appropriate scenery and costume helped to stimulate the imagination of the theatrical audience; on the other hand, glaring anachronism of

costume and the absence of any sort of pictorial background tended in Archer's view to disconcert and hamper the imagination. It was Beerbohm Tree's conclusion that Poel presented Shakespeare in such a way as to "commend him to few, while boring the many"; he maintained that the business of the manager should rather be to present Shakespeare in such a way as to commend him to many, even at the risk of agitating the few.³²

Poel, however, had a powerful ally in George Bernard Shaw who often criticized Shakespeare but concluded from observation that only on such an Elizabethan platform stage should Shakespeare be given. It was the playwright's contention that every play should be performed as its author intended it to be performed, and he never ceased trying to goad producers such as Irving, Tree and Daly into presenting the plays as "the wily William planned them."³³ The stage for which Shakespeare wrote his plays "is the only one to which they are adapted and on which they make the efforts he planned." One of the earliest of the Elizabethan Stage Society's productions, The Comedy of Errors in the Hall of Gray's Inn in December 1895, was hailed by Shaw as "delectable entertainment which defies all description by the pen," surely a unique tribute from that particular pen.³⁴ Sharing Poel's belief that, stimulated by Shakespeare's poetry, the imagination can accomplish wonders, Shaw praised Poel's efforts and stated that the only Shakespearean performances by which he had been really moved were those of the Elizabethan Stage Society.³⁵

In his presentation of Romeo and Juliet at the Royalty, Poel accomplished his desire to recreate as far as possible what scholars believed were the Elizabethan staging conditions that Shakespeare had

used and to return to the intimacy, continuity and swift pace found in Shakespeare's own production. It was his goal to be faithful to the dramatist's words in the Prologue and present the entire play to the audience in "the two hours' traffic of our stage." By using flexible methods of production believed to approximate to Elizabethan practice, he showed that it was possible to present all the scenes in the right order and in unbroken sequence; the dramatist had merely used dialogue to change scenery and Poel followed suit.

It was not only the use of scenery and interpolated business that had greatly lengthened Shakespearean production in the past two centuries, but also the slow declamatory style of speaking that had arisen on the stage since Shakespeare's time: "The two and a half hours in which a play in Shakespeare's time was often acted would not be possible today, even without delays for acts and scenes, with the methods of elocution now in vogue."³⁶ In a contemporary production of Hamlet, for example, Edwin Forrest took six full minutes to get through "To be or not to be" and was praised for his deliberation. Henry Irving's idiosyncratic delivery of Shakespeare's verse with his slow pronunciation and elongation of syllables had caused one of his reviewers, Joseph Knight, to comment that in Irving's productions the dramatist's poetry was relegated to music without melody: "It is impossible to preserve the music of Shakespeare if words of one syllable are to be stretched out to the length of five or six."³⁷ William Archer, too, had long condemned actors for stressing every monosyllable when speaking Shakespeare's verse, and lamented that contemporary actors had no understanding "of the

art of musical delivery" while the public were content "to have exquisite poetry spoken as bad prose." The speaking of blank verse had become a lost art. It was necessary, he stressed, for both actors and audiences to have some conception of the swiftness and musicality of Shakespearean verse; without these, Archer reasoned, "how can anyone have more than the faintest glimmering of the true beauty of such a poem as Romeo and Juliet"?³⁸

When Poel presented Romeo and Juliet it became his objective to restore the style of speaking that he felt Elizabethan actors had used on the stage. From 1887 to 1897 much of Poel's work had taken the form of directed readings of poetic drama, as Instructor of the Shakespeare Reading Society. He stipulated that his actors should speak quickly and clearly and without oratorical effect in a highly coloured, musically inflected speech of great range and suppleness. Poel's methods for accomplishing the proper elocution helped to earn his reputation as an eccentric. In rehearsal he gave the actors what he called "the tunes"; in other words he laid down the relative pitch at which each successive word was to be spoken and the actors learned these precise intonations along with the words to which they applied. His first step was to cast the play orchestrally. He decided which characters represented the double-bass, the cello, the woodwind, so to speak, and chose his actors by the timbre, pitch, and flexibility of their voices, far more than from their experience or even their acting skill. He then worked out the eventual sound of the whole play, the melody, stress, rhythm, and phrasing of every sentence.³⁹ Dramatic emphasis, pauses, facial

expressiveness, anything that interefered with "the music of the verse" was actively discouraged. The cast would spend two or three weeks learning his "tunes" while he lay back listening with his eyes closed. Sometimes he would lock an actor in a room all night until his speech had the desired musical sound. Understandably, many actors refused to work with him. What Poel achieved, however, as G. Wilson Knight points out, was "fluent verse speaking dependent on a close regard to the natural emphases of rational speech and the avoidance of irrelevant and laboured stresses elsewhere."⁴⁰ The general effect in Poel's productions was one of swiftness and lightness, with a minimum of heavy stresses even in strong dramatic passages.

In his production of Romeo and Juliet it was Poel's objective, not only to restore as many as possible of the staging conditions that he thought would have governed the dramatist's own presentation of the play, but to be faithful to the author's intentions in the interpretation of the text. Since Shakespeare's time a number of stage practices had become established and these conventions had increasingly distanced productions of the play from the intentions clearly indicated by the author. The Elizabethan Stage Society had been founded with the express purpose of going "straight to the Shakespearean text." Instead of using acting editions of previous productions Poel examined the original texts, and in each one of his productions it became his claim to "have corrected a wrong tradition about a character or characters."⁴¹ He felt that in Romeo and Juliet Shakespeare had purposely emphasized the youth of the lovers. Most productions of the play had counted on seasoned performers to capture an aura of youthful innocence: Henry Irving and Ellen Terry,

for example, had both been middle-aged when they performed the roles. George Bernard Shaw explained Poel's innovative approach towards the play: "Mr. Poel had the ridiculous habit of going to see what Shakespear said . . . He said 'I will get a child of fourteen' and accordingly he performed 'Romeo and Juliet' in that way."⁴² For the roles of the two teenagers Poel found his ideals in Esmé Percy who was seventeen and Dorothy Minto who was fourteen.⁴³ Both had the temperament, if not the experience, for their parts. Poel preferred in all his productions to work with inexperienced actors, finding them more malleable to his ideas and discovering that experienced actors were usually too steeped in Irving's ideas to accept his own innovations. Instead of cold technique the lovers brought the ardor of extreme youth. Shaw praised the realistic casting and said that "for the first time" Romeo and Juliet "became endurable."⁴⁴ Harold Child went further in his praise and, finding that the youth of the lovers conferred on them a pathos they might never have obtained by histrionic means, described Poel's Romeo and Juliet as the only performance of the play he had ever been able to believe in.⁴⁵ Franco Zeffirelli's production fifty-five years later would bring out a similar emphasis on youth.

It was Poel's belief that far too many productions of Shakespeare's plays concentrated their efforts on the major characters and consequently either conventionalized the roles or omitted some of the lines of the minor characters. Dr. Furnivall, president of the London Shakespeare League, agreed with Poel's condemnation of those actor-managers who "mutilated Shakespeare" to suit their own caprice or egotism

and who seemed to think that the productions were for displaying them and not Shakespeare.⁴⁶ Because of the cult of the star performer, minor characters were not allowed to upstage principals. There had been a facile readiness on the stage to identify secondary characters with stock theatrical types and this practice had falsified their relationships and their dramatic functions.⁴⁷ In the interpretation of the minor characters little or no individuality had been allowed and it became Poel's goal to restore both the individuality and the importance of each character to the play. In the first scene of the play Poel pointed out that Shakespeare, in less than thirty lines, quickly introduces seven persons, all of whom indicate their characters by the attitude they assume towards the quarrel. He summed them up as "peace-loving Benvolio," "fiery Tybalt," "imperious and vigorous Capulet and his characterless wife," and the "calm dignified" Lady Montague.⁴⁸ The Prince especially was to be stressed as a central figure speaking with a precision and decisiveness that throws every other character on the stage into insignificance.

One interpretation that Poel set out to correct was that of Capulet. In scene ii of the first act "the assumed dignity and good breeding of Capulet . . . are to be noted"; but it is in the fifth scene, however, that Capulet's rebuke of Tybalt gives an insight into his real character (p. 231). Poel criticized a recent production of the play in which Frank Marshall followed a stage tradition and interpreted Capulet as "a meddlesome mollycoddle," somewhat like Polonius (p. 232). Poel disagreed with this facile correlation, believing the fussiness of Polonius to proceed from his vanity and from his mental and physical

impotence. He saw Capulet's activity, on the other hand, as the outcome of a love of domineering, springing from his pride of birth and his consciousness of physical superiority. This view could be defended by observing Capulet's thunderous anger at Tybalt:

He shall be endured:
What, goodman boy! I say, he shall: go to;
Am I the master here, or you? go to.
(I.v. 74-76)

Beside such a man Lady Capulet would appear as a "mere cipher," having lost much of her individuality in her marriage with Capulet (p. 232).

In Poel's conception the Nurse had been introduced into the play as its principal comic character and her excellent comedy with its "unseemly sentences," in I.iii., for example, was designed to please the "rude multitude" (p. 231). He criticized Irving's production for cutting minor comic speeches such as the servant's speech in I.ii. about the shoemaker and his "yard." This particular omission had prompted Poel to ask, "Why are virtuous tragedians always anxious to rob the low comedians of their cakes and ale?" (p. 231).

Poel saw that far too many productions since Shakespeare's time had concentrated disproportionately on the love element in the story; as a result the playwright's ever-present contrast of love and hate had often not been given enough emphasis on the stage. Poel recognized, as had Henry Irving, that Shakespeare, who was not partial to prologues, had used one here to guide the action of his play, thus striking the keynote to the tone of the entire drama. He had used the hatred of the two houses and the parents' strife as a lurid background against which to portray with greater vividness the "fearful passage" of the "star-crossed

lovers" (Prologue). In I.v., where Romeo and Juliet meet for the first time, Shakespeare had ensured that his audience not forget the hostility that would keep the two lovers forever "star-crossed." Here the charm of their tender utterances is contrasted by an undercurrent of hatred, as Tybalt's recognition of a Montague gives warning of a fresh outbreak of hostilities: "but this intrusion shall, / Now seeming sweet, convert to bitter gall" (I.v. 89-90). Poel found it incomprehensible that a tradition had grown in which stage Juliets in the balcony scene "go through their billing and cooing as deliberately as they do their toilets" (p. 223), never for a moment thinking that the place is "death" to Romeo (II.i. 64), and that "love's sweet bait" must be stolen from "fearful hooks" (I.v. 150). To emphasize only the love episode was to make that episode far less tragic and therefore less dramatic.

The scene in which Romeo and Juliet meet to be married at the Friar's cell ends the second act on the stage. Most productions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including those of Garrick and Irving, had created a grand tableau at this point, interpolating such business as the Friar joining the hands of the couple to the accompaniment of blissful wedding music. Poel, however, explained that dropping the curtain at this point was contrary to Shakespeare's purpose, since it interrupted the dramatic moment just as it was striving for the climax of Tybalt's death and the banishment of Romeo. The following incidents "require action that is all hurry and excitement, and are therefore out of place at the beginning of an act, unless it be the opening act of a play" (p. 234). He abhorred the Victorian tradition of

creating tableaux, processions and scenes without dialogue; in a play such as Romeo and Juliet he found the electrifying speed of the action to be vital and any attempt to chop the play into tableaux debased the play into sensationalism. The action of the play as conceived by Shakespeare was at once complicated and swift, the scenes often so short and so closely dovetailed that each episode must be allowed its natural rhythm. Any interruption for the sake of creating a beautiful scene was disastrous to the total effect. Poel discovered that the platform stage and Elizabethan set that he had recreated were eminently practical for the quick changes necessitated by the text.

Poel particularly condemned Henry Irving's excision of a large section at the end of III.i., an omission made so that the curtain could fall on a tableau in which Romeo reacts to Tybalt's death with a heart-rending "O, I am fortune's fool" (III.i. 128). Conceiving the latter part of this scene to be brilliant in the variety and rapidity of its action, he felt that Irving had completely disregarded the dramatist's construction of the play:

To take out the second renewal of hostilities between the two houses; not to show, in action on the stage, the rage of the Capulets at the death of Tybalt, and the grief of the Montagues at the banishment of Romeo, is to weaken the tragic significance of the scenes that follow. (p. 235)

Without these reactions of the two families the audience would not vividly realize that the hatred of the two houses had reached its peak of intensity and that all hope of reconciliation seemed futile. Poel blamed the rise of actor-managers and star-actors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for the creation of tableaux and for the cutting of many minor parts. These actors, he charged, showed a ruthless disregard

for the fact that their business was "to interpret the author, not to re-write his plays the better to set off their own talents," and thereby to increase the importance of their own parts.⁴⁹

Poel held Capulet's role in the last two scenes of the third act to be very important. In III.iv. Capulet is shown fixing a date for the marriage of Juliet to Paris and the father's words "I think she will be ruled/ In all respects by me; naymore, I doubt it not" (III.iv. 13-14) have a significance and render the parting of the lovers in the next scene highly dramatic. In III.v. Juliet has just spent her wedding night with Romeo when the news of her betrothal and marriage to Paris is sprung upon her with terrible abruptness. She hardly has time to protest before her father enters to complete her distress with his torrents of abuse. Poel said that it was at this point that the audience should realize that "Capulet's varnish of good manners has entirely disappeared and that his coarse nature now stands out in its full nakedness" (p. 238). In this emergency Juliet leaps into womanhood and realizes her position and responsibilities as a wife. It is in the following lines that Poel saw Shakespeare touching the "first note of highest tragedy in the play, that of the mind's suffering as opposed to the mere tragedy of incident" (p. 238):

O God! -- O nurse, how shall this be prevented?
My husband is on earth, my faith in heaven;
How shall that faith return again to earth,
Unless that husband send it me from heaven
By leaving earth? -- comfort me, counsel me.
(III.v. 204-208)

These lines Poel considered to be the climax of the scene and of the play so far as it had progressed. They also marked the turning-point in

Juliet's moral nature. From this point on all is calm in Juliet's breast, because there is no infirmity of purpose: "If all else fail, myself have power to die" (III.v. 240).

Act IV.iii. is the scene that Poel conceived as the most dramatic episode in the entire play, and his major criticism of previous productions was that Juliet's terrible ordeal was usually dragged out too long and often overacted on the stage: "Our Juliets," he said, "do too much strumping and frumping about" (p. 239). He envisioned Juliet laying her dagger on the table, standing motionless in the centre of the stage speaking the lines in a hurried low whisper, conveying the impression of reflection as well as the need for discretion. At the words "O look! methinks I see my cousin's ghost" (IV.iii. 55) Juliet was to sink on one knee and with a quick movement point her arm into space. The words "stay, Tybalt, stay!" (IV.iii. 57) were not, as commonly performed, to be given with a scream but in a tone of alarm and entreaty, followed immediately by the drinking of the potion, as if to suggest Juliet's desire to come to Romeo's rescue. The entire scene was to be acted in less than two minutes.

Poel believed that Shakespeare had purposely quickened the pace in the last four scenes of Act IV, and therefore any interruption such as an interval for changing scenery was contrary to his intention. In these scenes the audience could witness the dramatist's skillful use of contrast: Capulet's fury, Juliet's drinking of the potion, the rising and bustle of the household, the bridal march in the background, the Nurse's fearful discovery, the entrance of the parents and bridal party,

the wailing and wringing of hands, and the change of wedding music to solemn dirges. It was through contrast that the "Capulet scenes" before and after the potion scene heightened the tragedy of the potion scene. The accentuation of Capulet's character, of his brutal frankness, his indifference to everyone's interests but his own, and his delight in exacting a cringing obedience from others were designed by the dramatist "to move us with divine pity for Juliet's suffering" and through emphasis "to save the potion scene from the danger of appearing grotesque" (p. 240). Poel was convinced of the necessity to perform the four scenes without delay or interruption, having first witnessed his audience's reaction to his presentation in an 1888 reading of the play by the Shakespeare Reading Society: "the breathless attention that the episode excited convinced me that my conception of its dramatic treatment was a right one" (p. 240).

Poel also urged a restoration of the comic scene between Peter and the musicians at the end of IV.v. This scene and the first part of IV.ii. in which Capulet prepares busily for the marriage feast had usually been excised in earlier productions of the play. He justified the comic scene as a welcome relief after the intensity of the previous scenes and as a connecting link with the comic scenes in the earlier part of the play. In revealing Shakespeare's purpose for these scenes, Poel exposed the inadequacy of old acting editions. Arthur Sprague and J.C. Trewin, two modern critics, believe that one of Poel's greatest contributions to the restoration of Shakespeare's texts was his acknowledgment of the importance of seemingly minor passages. In their view Poel proved that "the cutting of Shakespeare's text is a delicate

and dangerous business. Even in passages which have little bearing on the immediate concerns of the play there may be meaning and purpose."⁵⁰

Poel was convinced that Shakespeare wished the last act of Romeo and Juliet to be dealt with briefly and the final catastrophe to be carried out effectively but simply. He condemned a contemporary edition of the play in common use which still retained Garrick's alterations to the last act. Garrick's version, he asserted, had "no right to be called Shakespeare's tragedy at all,"⁵¹ To discover Shakespeare's tragic vision in the last act of the play, Poel compared the dramatist's ending with that of Arthur Brooke, his immediate source. In Brooke's poem the children die for their defiance of their parents' wishes and Romeo, before death, prays to Heaven for mercy and forgiveness. Poel saw Shakespeare, however, striking only one note in Romeo's character, that of love. At the beginning of the play Romeo feels that by touching Juliet's hand he will make blessed his own rude hand, and when he dies he will "the doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss" (V.iii. 114). His is a love-devouring death but the agony of death does not countervail the exchange of joy that one short minute gives him in her sight. Shakespeare's treatment of the love episode differs from Brooke's, said Poel, "in his recognition that love, so long as it be strong as death, has an ennobling and not a debasing influence on character: we are made to feel that it is better for Romeo to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all" (p. 242). Shakespeare also meant Juliet's death to be carried out with the greatest simplicity and within a few moments of her awakening. The text shows neither time for reflection nor lamentation;

she has hardly spoken eight lines after the friar's exit and kissed the poison from her dead husband's lips before the watch enters the churchyard. It is the presence of the watch that goads her to lift the knife.

In Irving's conclusion to Romeo and Juliet the curtain fell as Juliet died and then reopened to a final grand tableau in which the Prince, surrounded by the corpses and the hastily gathered families, merely joined the hands of the two fathers and solemnly spoke the last two lines of the play. Poel was horrified at Irving's excision of 137 consecutive lines and his neglect of the importance of the minor characters: the crowd hurrying anxiously to the tomb, its horror at the sight of the dead couple, its amazement at finding they are man and wife, the Prince's stern rebuke, the bowed grief and shame of the two families, and the final reconciliation. He denounced Irving for failing to emphasize Shakespeare's more comprehensive point of view. It was his own contention that any production of the play must convey that Shakespeare "shows no tolerance" for the hatred of the two houses; the Prince's speeches were therefore necessary to emphasize the shame and grief of the two fathers (p. 242). Most important, however, was the reconciliation of the two families; Shakespeare's story, starting with a quarrel, must end with reconciliation. Poel saw the death of the two lovers as a "senseless sacrifice unless we have been allowed to feel the ferocity of the feud which is healed over their bodies."⁵²

It was Poel's position that no stage version of Romeo and Juliet was consistent with Shakespeare's intentions that did not give prominence to the hatred of the two houses and retain intact the three crowd scenes:

the one at the opening of the play, the second in the middle, and the third at the end. In omitting up to one third of the play, as had become stage fashion, much of Shakespeare's design had become lost. Shakespeare the dramatist could not be understood and appreciated to the full unless his play was performed in its entirety; if that condition were fulfilled, the author's point of view could not fail to declare itself. Poel praised Shakespeare's dramatic skills which had resulted in centuries of popularity for the play: "vigorous characterization, a vital and varied movement, and the skilful handling of scenes well calculated to stir the emotions of an audience, make Romeo and Juliet an acting play of enduring interest" (p. 244).

William Poel's production of the play at the Royalty in 1905 met with little critical acclaim at the time. Poel, a passionate Shakespearean and a true reformer whose practice came out of a clearly thought-out framework of concepts, presented Shakespeare's play according to his convictions rather than bowing to current theatrical fashions. The critics had begun to complain of too much scenery but it was going too far for them for a production to have no scenery at all, no stars in the cast, and the strain of listening to a musical speaking of the poetry "with its consonantal swiftness, its gradations sudden or slow into vowelled liquidity, its comic rushes and stops."⁵³ Most theatre-goers agreed with the evaluation of one of Poel's critics, A.B. Walkley, who proclaimed that Poel's efforts had "place in an educational curriculum but none in the catalogue of pleasures."⁵⁴ The makeshift platform stage was often a bleak-looking affair, the hall was apt to be chilly, and the

actors sometimes amateurish. Poel's insistence, however, that producers present Shakespeare's plays as he believed the dramatist wrote them prompted George Bernard Shaw to comment, ironically, "What a gigantic reform Mr. Poel will make if his Elizabethan stage should lead to such a novelty as a theatre to which people go to see the play instead of to see the cast."⁵⁵

Poel even today is still a contentious figure and rather a difficult person to come to terms with. He was so radically right in the main things that he did and so persevering against the forces of the spectacular theatre that he opposed, that one hates to have to qualify one's praise. And yet, so eccentric and single-minded was Poel that there is a good deal of justification in Speaight's description of Poel's mission as "Elizabethan Methodism"⁵⁶ and that, in some ways, he was a "visionary crank."⁵⁷ Poel's idiosyncrasies, his antiquarianism and his insistence on using amateur actors all hindered his cause. Perhaps he was too dogmatic in some of his assertions and too extreme in his insistence on "the tunes" but such notable actors and actresses as Granville-Barker, Lewis Casson, Esmé Percy, Robert Atkins, Nugent Monck, Ben Greet, and Edith Evans all credit Poel for their excellent grounding in Shakespearean verse-speaking.

Most importantly, Poel's recreation of what were believed to be the Elizabethan stage and methods of presentation fulfilled a much-needed revolution in Shakespearean production. He proved that Romeo and Juliet could be produced effectively without the many cuts, transpositions and lavish interpolated business that marked its presentation for the past two centuries, and he taught producers to examine closely Shakespeare's

text to discover the dramatist's structuring of the play. Because of his efforts minor scenes and characters were restored to their rightful importance. He performed the inestimable service of putting the Elizabethans back into their context, and of persuading us that they are all the more real for being allowed to speak for themselves.

Many of Poel's ideas concerning the presentation of Romeo and Juliet on the stage have now been adopted by theatrical custom; it is important, however, to see how he arrived at them. He arrived at them, not in the way that many modern producers arrive at their novelties; not by saying, "What can we do with the scene that has never been done before?" He arrived at them by the simple expedient of reading the play. Instead of saying, "This is where we want a big effect," as Garrick and Irving had done, he sat down and tried to find out what effect a literal fidelity to Shakespeare would produce. He was not interested in grand effects; he was only interested in effects that were significant.

It is the definition of a radical, says Robert Speaight, that he goes down to the roots of things, not that he pulls them up.⁵⁸ Poel's work in the theatre may be compared to a drastic pruning; the rose bush was stripped bare and cut short in order that it might produce, in time, more splendid blooms. His influence took a number of years to be felt but by 1913 The Times, which had condemned Poel in 1905, praised "the healthy activity over the new way" of producing Shakespeare, and said that Poel's productions could be taken as a sure sign that once more the world's classic had taken on new youth and meaning.⁵⁹

Chapter IV

Franco Zeffirelli: Anything Goes -- Twentieth-century Eclecticism

By the beginning of the twentieth century two dominant trends had developed in Shakespearean production and, although mutually hostile, they co-existed. Concluding a tradition which had started as early as the late eighteenth century Herbert Beerbohm Tree in the first decade of the twentieth century presented lavish spectacles of heavily-abridged plays at Her Majesty's Theatre in London, which had taken the place of the Lyceum as a "home for Shakespeare." Antithetically, because of the efforts of literary scholars in studying and establishing the actual text of Shakespeare's plays and investigating the conditions of his theatre, opening men's eyes for the first time to the sorts of effects that Shakespeare himself intended his plays to have, there was a new movement in the British theatre starting in the mid-nineteenth century and culminating with William Poel's significant efforts to re-establish the Elizabethan theatre for the production of Shakespeare's plays. Indeed, in the early twentieth century, for the first time since the late Jacobean period, theatre audiences actually saw Shakespeare more or less complete and harmoniously arranged, presented with an honest dedication to whatever Shakespeare's intentions scholarly discoveries and critical perceptions could elucidate.

From 1881 to 1932 Poel presented his ideas in non-commercial ventures to a largely sceptical public. Among his actors, however, was a

young man, Harley Granville-Barker who, together with George Bernard Shaw, had been among Poel's audience at his 1905 production of Romeo and Juliet and was much impressed with what he saw.¹ From 1912 to 1914 Granville-Barker -- by then an established man of the theatre -- set out to adapt Poel's ideas to the commercial theatre, producing three Shakespearean comedies at the Savoy on an apron stage with formalized scenery and no footlights.² To make time for an unabridged text, the whole tempo of the production needed to be quick and only one break in the action was allowed. Having learned from William Poel "how swift and passionate a thing, how beautiful in its variety, Elizabethan blank verse might be when tongues were trained to speak and ears acute to hear it,"³ Granville-Barker insisted on a much more rapid delivery than was usual in Shakespearean playing;⁴ helped his actors by bringing them into closer contact with their audience for the set speeches; and finally, created physical conditions which gave him facilities similar to those of the Elizabethan playhouse for uninterrupted transition from scene to scene. Other precious minutes were saved by his ruthless excision of bits of traditional business and clowning. Within sixteen months Granville-Barker had applied practical correctives to the outstanding weaknesses of the spectacular tradition for the presentation of Shakespeare. Some of Poel's major ideas had thus conquered the commercial theatre and, ameliorated in Granville-Barker's Prefaces to Shakespeare, reached a wider reading public than even Poel's book and articles reached.

"As he [Shakespeare] cannot now come to us, the nearer we get to him the closer understanding we shall have of him," claimed Barker,

echoing Poel,⁵ Barker, however, rejected the strict Elizabethanism of Poel and his disciples:

We cannot quite discard the present, and, even could we, entering into the past would be a harder matter still. We should need to sit in an Elizabethan theatre as Elizabethans and be able as unconsciously, as spontaneously to enjoy the play. For spontaneity of enjoyment is the very life of the theatre and its art. This cannot be. Some half-way house of meeting must be found.⁶

Barker thus recognized that it was impossible for a modern audience to turn themselves into Elizabethans, yet he never let himself forget the work of such Elizabethanists as Poel which helped him to realize the intrinsic relationship of Shakespeare's theatre and staging methods with those of his own.

After the first World War the teaching of Poel and Granville-Barker was well heeded and profitably applied by such directors as Lewis Casson at the Manchester Gaiety, and Robert Atkins and Harcourt Williams at the Old Vic. Instead of Shakespeare transposed, instead of acting versions prepared by star actor-managers about whom revolved the dim satellites of their casts, the full, or almost full text -- and, thanks to Pollard and his successors, a better text -- was presented on a stage approximating to that known to the Elizabethans; there, accompanied by simply symbolic instead of elaborately realistic scenery, a team of actors taught to "speak the speech trippingly on the tongue" under the direction of a specialist producer, was responsible for creating out of all the elements a harmonious whole. A 1935 production of Romeo and Juliet at the New Theatre under the direction of John Gielgud, for example, bore witness to the growing acceptance of many of Poel's and

Granville-Barker's ideas. Gielgud used a multiple set showing a return to a degree of localization and was more interested in forming a fine ensemble than in lone stardom. In Romeo and Juliet he shared the honours with Peggy Ashcroft, Edith Evans and Laurence Olivier, who alternated with Gielgud the roles of Romeo and Mercutio. The only major cuts were the second Chorus speech, the musicians' scene and some of Juliet's "I am not I" convolutions.

Poel's Elizabethan stage with its purely architectural background was seldom adapted for general use by modern producers. In essence, parts of his ideas were adapted at times for different purposes. The adherence to Poel's ideas was greatest at Nugent Monck's Maddermarket Theatre in Norwich where an Elizabethan stage and set with no extra scenery were used. Here, even today, a typical presentation of Romeo and Juliet is given in 2 1/4 hours, with a single interval of ten minutes and with only a few lines cut. Producers, on the whole, however, were reluctant to give up the technical advantages of the modern theatre in order to regain the speed and continuity of Elizabethan playing; but the impetus, the principles and the methods which determined the nature of modern production bore a direct link with Poel's insistence upon the relationship between the play and its own stage. After nearly three centuries of cutting and re-arranging, the theatre was beginning to come to terms with Shakespeare's texts in their entirety. Atrocities were still perpetrated in the name of the theatrical, but the idea that the author knew his business was now a serious factor in every good producer's calculations. The work of William Poel and Granville-Barker gave a characteristic bias to twentieth-century reforms, so that

ultimately many producers concentrated on matter rather than on manner and sought first, by recreating the original conditions of performance, to understand Shakespeare's dramatic technique in order fully to comprehend what it was the plays had to say.

By 1960 popular Shakespearean plays such as Romeo and Juliet had been produced practically every year of the twentieth century at a London theatre or at Stratford-upon-Avon; this particular play, for example, was performed three times at Stratford-upon-Avon alone between 1945 and 1960. There was now a concern among producers that audiences, who had been presented with more Shakespeare than any audiences had been during the past three centuries, had become over-familiar with some of Shakespeare's plays so that the magic of these plays needed to be restored in order to make the dramatist alive and relevant to the twentieth century.

In October 1960 the London Observer published the following comment about the latest production of Romeo and Juliet: "Last Tuesday at the Old Vic a foreign director approached Shakespeare with fresh eyes, quick wits and no stylistic preconceptions; and what he accomplished was a miracle."⁷ Theatre World spoke of an "exciting new production,"⁸ and John Russell Brown commented that it was a production of unique and consistent achievement which exchanged a number of conventional virtues for others such as intelligence, sympathy and authority.⁹ Franco Zeffirelli's production was hailed as innovative, even controversial, and its enduring popularity kept the play in the repertory of the Old Vic or its touring company for three seasons.

Up until this point the thirty six-year-old Zeffirelli had never directed a dramatic production, having worked exclusively on the operatic stage. In the post-World War II years he had been a film technician in Italy, working with de Sica, Rosellini and Visconti in the full flush of Italy's cinematic revival, essentially of a realistic nature, and when the directors at the Old Vic invited the young Italian opera director to stage their 1960-61 revival of Romeo and Juliet, he was at first reluctant: "It was difficult for a foreigner to believe that any but British or American people would be able to touch their own cultural heritage."¹⁰ The directors, however, were convinced that Zeffirelli's Italian background and success as an opera director at Covent Garden presented the perfect combination for a new stage version of this stirring tragedy set in old Verona. This confidence was abundantly justified by the play's popular success, so much so that Zeffirelli was encouraged to make a film of the play eight years later, a film that was so successful that people often think of the film rather than the stage production. That there is a difference is something one has to bear in mind.¹¹

Zeffirelli's first attempt at Shakespearean drama was marked by fluency and an ever-present care for the shaping both of individual scenes and the overall drama. It soon became apparent, however, that this production generally followed neither the ideals of William Poel and Granville-Barker to be true to what they felt were the author's clearly expressed intentions, nor the spectacular conventions of Irving and Tree, but embodied various elements from both traditions and also added other

ones not found in any of Poel's, Irving's or Garrick's productions of the play. The eclectic nature of the production showed Zeffirelli to be a part of that increasing number of theatre practitioners not tied to any one school.

As the curtain opened on the initial scene the audience was held by the sense of looking at a fifteenth-century painting, so well did the "lived-in" looking costumes match the muted colour of the crumbling buildings. The scenes and sets, designed by Zeffirelli himself, were descendants of those in Irving's production, remarkable for their realism. Explaining his portrait of Verona in Romeo and Juliet, Zeffirelli said that he thought of Shakespeare as a "frustrated traveler" who wanted to take his audience on a trip to Italy. It was the duty of the director, therefore, "to fill in the details of the scene Shakespeare never really saw."¹² Not heeding Williams Poel's insistence that in this play the sudden haste and frenzied activity militate against putting Verona on the scenic map, Zeffirelli treated his audience to a leisurely scenic trip through the old city. Accordingly, the opening scene started at a relaxed pace to establish atmosphere and mood. Together with the operatic influence of Italian "verismo," the influence of post-World War II cinematic naturalism could be seen. The dominant impression that the audience received was that of the natural behavior of the characters. The characters were neither larger nor smaller than life; they were life-size. The director handled them as if they were real people in a real situation, asking himself just how such people in the situation would behave. The scene showed children scuffling and vendors bawling while the youthful crowd drifted purposefully about, obviously anticipating the

moment when someone would bite his thumb and the swords could be unleashed. The stage business was incessant and multifarious but appeared as the natural accompaniment of the characters' activities. The young people were portrayed as unaffected teenagers who ate apples and threw them, splashed each other with water, mocked, laughed, and shouted.

For Zeffirelli this was a contemporary drama and these were common youths: the director, wishing to show the relevance of Shakespeare to a modern world, disregarded the princeliness of bearing and of speech, and rejected the impression of the young bloods of Verona as flat reproductions of more elegant figures. Instead, he brought them down to the level of the common man. When the tense calm on the stage broke, the stage in an instant was turned into a brawl of great violence and precision, prompting one critic to comment that the inverted class-consciousness reminded him of race riots in North Kensington.¹³ For another viewer the reference was clear: this was West Side Story without Leonard Bernstein.¹⁴ Jorgens depicts the youths as they appeared in Zeffirelli's production:

There is a fatal self-destructive urge in these youths. They are reckless, bored, cynical -- children of the feud. . . . They are implicated in keeping the feud going. It provides them an outlet for feelings of jealousy, insecurity, and rage not merely at the old and everything they are responsible for but at mortality in all its forms.¹⁵

In the third act Zeffirelli stressed the hot Italian sun which produced another clash of swords. Mercutio here was the obvious leader of the Montague faction, an intense, sourly witty youth aware of his intellectual supremacy. Zeffirelli saw no gaiety in this fellow; earlier

in the play his Queen Mab speech had been spoken in angry defiance rather than in the usual light whimsical manner. Stage business during the fight between Mercutio and Tybalt sprang from words spoken, revealing the director's desire to unify Shakespeare's words with youthful and spontaneous action. The clash held a mixture of daring and mockery which reflected the exaggeration of the text:

Consort! what, dost thou make us minstrels? an thou
make minstrels of us, look to hear nothing but discords; here's
my fiddlestick; here's that shall make you dance. 'Zounds,
consort!

(III.i.41-44)

Zeffirelli's excessive emphasis on the fierce and frenzied battle between the two youths caused critics such as Thomas Kilfoil to complain that the director was capitulating to the "violence and savagery the films have taught us to expect."¹⁶ This production, however, was not the first to stress the fights between the youths of Verona: Glen Byam Shaw's presentation of the play at Stratford-upon-Avon two years earlier had prolonged the fire and urgency in the battles and had shown Mercutio and Romeo viciously sticking daggers into their opponents.

Zeffirelli's major goal in producing Romeo and Juliet was to portray the twin themes of love and the total breakdown of understanding between two generations. In his depiction of the older generation, he was not timid about going beyond the text to flesh out Shakespeare's characters. The Montagues were seen as a noble military family who had "gone to seed," producing in their decline only students such as Romeo who learned verses and Benvolio who carried books.¹⁷ The Capulets, on the other hand, were portrayed as a rich merchant family, full of social climbers, men of wealth as well as men of action. "In the English

theatre you don't need to emphasize upper-classness," explained Zeffirelli about his decision not to stress the nobility of the two old ducal families. "In fact you need to underplay it. In Italy or America it would be different. You would have to build up the formal dignity."¹⁸

Only the Prince was envisioned by him as an aristocrat. At the end of the first brawl the aged chieftains were left to bellow unheard, thus making the Prince who would stop such an affray a very important figure indeed. In this production, when Capulet warned Paris that women too early wed are "too soon marr'd" (I.ii.14) the audience could see by the gestures between Lord and Lady Capulet that this was an unhappy marriage.¹⁹

Lady Capulet primped herself repeatedly in a mirror and she seemed nervous about, and virtually incapable of, talking to her daughter. Lord Capulet's only interest was not the happiness of his daughter but his "I'll not be forsworn" attitude, an attitude that Zeffirelli stressed as part of the prevailing code of the older generation. The audience thus saw Juliet in a family circle which was not a harmonious one and within which, as Shakespeare's text indicates, she had no real communication. Romeo also never really seemed to exist in a family context; he was usually seen wandering alone, aimlessly, or with friends.

To capture the reality of the younger generation, Zeffirelli followed the example set by William Poel and sought actors as young as possible. He knew that Romeo and Juliet, in a play about the joy and pain of youthful love, could still speak to modern audiences about the basic truths of experience, but not when, as Albert Cirillo points out,

"they are made incredibly distant and alien by the kind of stodgy treatment which makes the play an object of idolatry rather than an intimate and shared experience."²⁰ When reminded that his cast was inexperienced, Zeffirelli rubbed his hands together and happily replied, "So much the better!"²¹ Young actors, in his view, could not only bring the immediacy of their own experience and youth to the roles, but their still unformed voices could themselves be most effective instruments to wring youthful pathos out of the lines and scenes. These young actors would have a kind of intuitive understanding of the situation; after all, explained Zeffirelli, the story is one of young people "finding identity in a troubled era, just like today. Like kids today these two were quite revolutionary."²² Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, he said, are adolescents on the edge of experience, on the brink of consequences which their own guilelessness and innocence lead them to. The fact that audiences are moved, that they do laugh, and that they are brought to the verge of tears, should demonstrate how right this conception is.

In the ballroom scene Zeffirelli's effective grouping of actors, suggestive blending of colours, and striking pictorial composition showed both his skills as an opera director and as a former apprentice to the Italian film producer Luchino Visconti. In a scene reminiscent of the grand style of Irving, he presented the energetic movement of the ball and sought to prolong the timeless moment when Romeo and Juliet first meet. An examination of Shakespeare's text reveals that Capulet's banquet seems to exist simultaneously in two different time-scales. There is the bustling present tense, with its reminder of normal chronology, in Capulet's reference to the past, his conversation with his

cousin about age, in Tybalt's fierce reactions to Romeo's presence, and in Capulet's remark about the lateness of the hour: ". . . it waxes late" (i.v.124). Within this present tense there lies the exquisitely lyrical timeless moment of Romeo and Juliet's first meeting. The audience is almost jolted from one time-scale to another by the contrast in the linguistic patterns. Tybalt's words:

I will withdraw: but this intrusion shall,
Now seeming sweet, convert to bitter gall
(I.v.89-90)

are followed by:

If I profane with my unworhiest hand
This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this,
(I.v.91-92)

and the gentle and kissed farewell of the two lovers is followed by a raucous return to the present tense in the Nurse's shout: "Madam, your mother craves a word with you" (I.v.109). The different time-values of this scene are definitely indicated by the contrasting language patterns of the two worlds which are brought into existence in the banquet. No more striking confirmation of the contrast and its effects could be imagined than in Zeffirelli's production of the scene. To start with, the two main characters were shown dancing in concentric circles, whirling in opposite directions. Zeffirelli lengthened the scene; his Romeo and Juliet after having first viewed one another, had to seek one another for some time before they were able to exchange their first words. The restless present tense was depicted in bustling movement, gay dancing, laughter, and loud music at back-stage. Out of this the two lovers emerged to meet front-stage. At the moment of recognition of love

and beauty, both the visual and aural impression of the present tense began to fade and, as the love-dialogue between the two developed, the present-tense action in the background was deliberately slowed down -- as in a slow-motion film scene -- coming almost to a stop. The impression was as if a timeless moment had been created and had begun to dominate the present tense, almost to the point of annihilating it.

In this production Romeo and Juliet fell in love more through looking and touching than through talking. It was both in this scene and in the initial fight scene that Zeffirelli brought out a sharp contrast between the generations: the young acted and the old talked. His direction suggested that the communication between young people is not necessarily words, as it is for the older generation, but gesture and action. All the older characters were more adept at handling language and verse than the young protagonists, yet Zeffirelli was able to reveal that nonetheless, the older generation achieved no real communication or relationships. The true nature of the communication between the young was epitomized in Romeo's relationship with Juliet. The beautiful lengthy sequence by which they came together at the ball was done with looks and gestures: they touched one another while dancing; they looked at one another across a closed circle of their elders; and, as they spoke obliquely of pilgrims and shrines, they touched hands ceremoniously. They really did not need the words, as young lovers seldom do. Earlier in the production Romeo and Mercutio had similarly established rapport through gesture. Mercutio's Queen Mab speech had been spoken amidst much movement, making that speech indicative of his restlessness rather than a static recitation or aria. During the speech Mercutio had shaken Romeo

understandingly, and when Mercutio's voice faded out in seemingly vacant ravings, Romeo had touched and embraced him. Their heads then met in silent understanding and communication.

The profuse rhetoric of the impotent older generation found expression in the worldly advice of the Nurse, the tardy letters and spiritual guidance of the Friar, and the lecturing and threatening of Capulet and the Prince. Zeffirelli had Mercutio respond to Benvolio's echoings of parental caution with "blah, blah, blah"; and had Romeo, while awaiting Juliet for the wedding, so impatient with Friar Laurence's tired proverbial sayings, that he filled in the next word each time the holy man paused. The old thus seemed overly deliberate, unspontaneous, and slow compared with the youth. The Prince, for example, on his first entry stood up centre, and his words were accompanied by a muffled rolling drum off-stage, but he lacked dramatic life comparable to that of the youths around him. On his return after the death of Tybalt, he still seemed out of touch with the other characters, for these hitherto agile and fluently organized figures immediately became fixed in postures at either side. In the last scene where the Prince finds himself implicated in the general sorrow and guilt -- "for winking at your discords" (V.iii.293) -- he stood so unmoving and so high above the heads of everyone else on the stage, that he necessarily spoke in the earlier lifeless and formal manner.

In the balcony scene Zeffirelli continued to use gesture and action to epitomize the communication between the young; here, grace became subordinate to circumstance, the ideal to the real. Shakespeare's

Romeo approaches Juliet as a devout pilgrim and the effect is one of hushed solemn dedication. The poetry and poignancy of the balcony scene derive from the fact that these young lovers never touch, however much they would desire to. In Zeffirelli's production, when Judi Dench as Juliet asked

What man art thou, that, thus bescreen'd in night,
So stumblest on my counsel?

(II.ii.52-53)

John Stride as Romeo clumsily stumbled out of the bushes and blurted out his response. The director's aim was to achieve an awkward verisimilitude, revealing an adolescent in a passionate situation which probably had no real precedent for him, because his previous infatuation had been much less intense. This Romeo was obviously anxious to touch his Juliet. Instead of leaping balletically up a conveniently placed creeper, he had to concentrate prosaically on climbing a highly unco-operative little tree to reach a narrow ledge. Along this ledge he then inched to his beloved and touched fingertips with her, maintaining the while a perilous balance. The ensuing encounter was grave and awkward.

Zeffirelli's own account of the titular figures in this play was that "Juliet must be strong and Romeo gentle."²³ Accordingly, for all her girlishness, this Juliet was in charge of a properly boyish, ardent Romeo; Dench made it transparently clear that Juliet was determined to have her own way. Important was her occasional giggle, used by Zeffirelli to suggest her youth and charm, and to invoke in an instant that girlish vitality which would enrapture a Romeo. As indicated by Shakespeare's text, Romeo carried about him an air of melancholy which somehow emphasized the first stirrings of a boy's romantic passion, and

this melancholy made it difficult for him,, even when sure of Juliet's love, to enter even momentarily into the gaiety of Mercutio and his companions. The youth was revealed as the more self-conscious lover of the two but when pressed by Juliet to swear his love "by thy gracious self" (II.ii.113), his response, relentlessly modernized by Zeffirelli, was to seal his oath "If my heart's dear love --" (II.ii.115) by smothering her with kisses.

Zeffirelli's treatment of the scene was praised by Albert Cirillo who called it "one of the most refreshing balcony scenes ever staged,"²⁴ and contended that the director's care in complementing the words with the natural exuberant behaviour of the two teenagers had caused the scene to fit in with the overall production. Consequently, the exchange between the two lovers did not "stand in isolation as the purple passage everyone waits for." It was played between two young people obviously eager to touch one another, eager for one another even in the hazardous circumstances of the meeting; not as a scene between two accomplished actors self-confident in their facility of handling iambic pentameter. Not played as a piece "before which we must genuflect as before a sacred, and ever-so-distant, religious scene," the effect produced was, instead, one of realism.²⁵

This very realism, however, was condemned by other critics. Zeffirelli, said Kenneth McClellan, had "unbearably vulgarized" Shakespeare's play and had dragged it down to the commonplace.²⁶ J.C. Trewin expressed unhappiness that Zeffirelli had directed the balcony scene so busily "that its still rapture vanished";²⁷ and Robert Speaight,

summarizing Zeffirelli's treatment of the story, said that he had looked at Romeo and Juliet through the eyes of an Italian realist, but Shakespeare had looked at the same story through the eyes of an English romanticist.²⁸

A number of critics commented that the director had broken up many of the speeches in the play with too much stage business and that the poetry was spoken indifferently by the young actors. It was Zeffirelli's aim, however, to have the dialogue not appear as the effect of care and study but as the natural idiom of the characters. He approached the text on the assumption that "it could have been spoken by real people in a real human context and that many sacrifices were worth making in order to get it spoken that way."²⁹ What mattered, he felt, was "modernity of feeling, modernity inside." The verse, he argued, must always have an intimate rhythm, the rhythm of reality, and that it must never become music. An animated style of speech was therefore considered appropriate to much of the dialogue of the young characters. Defending his fusion of poetry and extensive action, he said that he saw language primarily as a key to character but that he was also interested in actions and gestures as the "poetry of human relationships,"³⁰ this statement thus showing his deep distrust of Shakespeare's language. Such a conception of the intertwining of Shakespeare's poetry with extensive action was far removed indeed from that of William Poel who, for over fifty years as a Shakespearean producer, had been dedicated to recreating for audiences the music of the bard's verse and had painstakingly worked out the probable sound of an Elizabethan performance, the melody, stress, rhythm of every sentence. His

presentation of Romeo and Juliet had emphatically discouraged any stage business that might interfere with the rhythm of the poetry.

Zeffirelli structured his production to fall into complementary halves. The first half, up to and including the wedding sequence, was youthfully exuberant; Romeo and Juliet were made as childlike and innocent as possible. In the wedding scene when Friar Laurence told the waiting Romeo "Here comes the lady" (II.vi.16), he stepped between the lovers to effect a comic collision involving all three figures; he then was forced to hold the couple apart as they impulsively hugged and kissed each other. Such stage business was inapposite to Shakespeare's text as expressed in the Friar's foreboding words: "These violent delights have violent ends" (II.vi.9). To Zeffirelli these two were symbolic children and in their innocence they seemed hardly aware of the implications of what they were about to do; indeed, there was little indication in the production thus far that the play would end tragically. Both Henry Irving and William Poel, by contrast, had stressed from the outset of their productions the "death-mark'd love" (Prologue) which would cause the "star-cross'd lovers" to take their lives. As Zeffirelli's Romeo and Juliet knelt before the Friar the unity of their love was emphasized by a circle enclosing them. The scene then ended on a note of tranquility as golden hues illuminated the couple bowing their heads to the Friar's ". . . you shall not stay alone/ Till holy church incorporate two in one" (II.vi.36-37).

In the second half of the production the lovers were brought face to face with the factors in their environment which were working against

their happiness: the hotheadedness of Tybalt and the willfulness of the older generation, particularly as seen in Lord Capulet, now became intrusive, forcing the lovers to their tragic end. The duel between Tybalt and Mercutio began as a playful joust, as Zeffirelli conceived it, and became fatal simply because Romeo got in the way. The fortunes of Romeo and Juliet which up to this point seemed in the ascendant were now suddenly reversed by a chance encounter for which Romeo was partially responsible, lending considerable force to his pitiful cry that he was "fortune's fool" (III.i.129). Zeffirelli's handling of the scene made potently clear in performance that the interaction of ill-doing and ill-luck provided the essence of this scene and was basic in the design of the play as a whole. Cirillo praised Zeffirelli's adherence to Shakespeare's use of contrast, observing that the director had made the tragic seriousness of this half of the play all the more effective "because it is superimposed on our consciousness of the lighter tone of the first half with its indelible sense of youth."³¹

Amidst the quickening pace of events Romeo and Juliet's farewell after their night together stood out in particular contrast to the turbulent activity and festive colours of their initial encounters. Zeffirelli saw the scene as the greatest instance of pathos in the play as the young lovers sought to perpetuate the moment; the tragedy was that this aspiration was impossible. To lend a sense of realism and what Kenneth Tynan referred to as "earthiness" to the scene, Zeffirelli dominated his set with a lofty four-poster bed in which the couple lay. As reluctant words about the break of day were spoken it became clear to the audience that it was "sheer newly-wedded exhaustion, as much as love

or fear of the law" that delayed Romeo's leave-taking.³² Garrick's and Irving's productions had been bound by rigid contemporary conventions of sexual propriety; in the second half of the twentieth century, however, there were increasingly insistent demands for the relaxation of all restraints in the theatre. In the direction of this scene Zeffirelli's attitude was one similar to the approach taken by many writers, dramatic producers and film producers after the second World War: refusing to ignore sexual relationships, directors now sought to emphasize them.

As the play progressed to its tragic ending, Zeffirelli showed the bleakness of his protagonists' surroundings to help emphasize the imprisonment of the lovers in a hopeless pattern of events. The dominant white of Juliet's room, the sombre tones of Friar Laurence's cell, the dark of Capulet's house, the subdued funeral for Juliet, the shadowy house of Romeo in exile, the Capulet tomb, and the desolate square filled with mourners in black all served to erase the earlier festivity and now effectively embodied a shift in tone.

John Russell Brown, reviewing the Zeffirelli production, commented that the director in his portrayal seemed "unsure" of Romeo and Juliet's new dignity and authority in confronting catastrophe later in the play.³³ Shakespeare's text shows Juliet starting to mature when, abandoned by her parents, she turns to the Nurse for comfort and finds none. The dramatist expresses the moment verbally:

Ancient damnation! O most wicked fiend
Is it more sin to wish me thus forsworn,
Or to dispraise my lord with that same tongue
Which she hath praised him with above compare

So many thousand times? -- Go counsellor;
 Thou and my bosom henceforth shall be twain.
 (III.v.233-238)

In Zeffirelli's production, Juliet's concluding line in this scene, with its authoritative and calm phrasing, "If all else fail, myself have power to die" (III.v.240), she spoke lightly on the point of running from the stage. This very line William Poel had recognized as the crucial turning-point in Juliet's moral nature, as she leaps into womanhood and realizes her position and responsibilities as a wife. Shakespeare's text also heightens Romeo's stature in the final scene when he shows authority and compassion before the dead bodies of the other young men. In Zeffirelli's version of the play Romeo's description of Paris as "One writ with me in sour misfortune's book" (V.iii.82 and

Tybalt, liest thou there in thy bloody sheet?
 O, what more favour can I do to thee
 Than with that hand that cut thy youth in twain
 To sunder his that was thine enemy?
 Forgive me, cousin!

(V.iii.97-101)

were both excised and no effect at realizing either authority or compassion was attempted.

Important moments of grief were also underplayed in this production. The distraction, frustration and fear of the young lovers were well represented with nervous intensity and many interpolations of cries, groans and other physical reactions, but these physical responses were at variance with the technical demands of long speeches filled with elaborate syntax and rhetoric. The more considered and profound grief was absent. In Romeo's address to the Apothecary, for example, the director concentrated on its agitation, so that his Romeo repeatedly

struck the "caitiff wretch." Such energetic action could not represent understanding, consideration, compassion, even cynicism, responses that are implicit in this complex moment of grief and resolution:

The world is not thy friend, nor the world's law:
 The world affords no law to make thee rich;
 Then be not poor, but break it, and take this.

 I sell thee poison, thou hast sold me none,
 Farewell: buy food, and get thyself in flesh.
 (V.i.72-84)

Zellirelli thus tended to minimize as well as trivialize the drama and to emphasize the more superficial dramatic aspects. It was obviously his intention to keep the young lovers childlike and innocent even after their consummated marriage and to show that, despite the catastrophic events involving them, they still remained helpless children. Romeo and Juliet were not to lose the golden aura of innocence insulating them from reality, and the audience was to see little sense of maturation in their love.

Much was cut from the second half of the play. It may well be that Zeffirelli purposely tried to speed up Acts III, IV and V, sensing that the tempo had become too slack. The chief cause of slowness in the first part of the production was an overdone emphasis on scenic realism and the director's practice of prolonging the beginning of a scene or the entrance of a character in order to establish atmosphere. Romeo's entrance in the first scene of the play, for example, had been long and silent, accompanied by shouting and laughter off-stage; his solitary self-absorbed nature was thereby effectively revealed. The brawls, ballroom scene and balcony scene had all been drawn out with extensive

stage business; as a result, it took an hour alone in performance to reach the end of II.ii. A further forty minutes was needed to get to the end of III.i., and this left but an hour and ten minutes for most of Act III and the whole of Acts IV and V.³⁴

Making a decision comparable to that of both Garrick and Irving, Zeffirelli completely sacrificed the short fourth scene in Act III in which Capulet sets a wedding date for Juliet and Paris, so that more time could be spent on the subsequent scene in which Romeo and Juliet part after their night together. Another short scene omitted was IV.iv. which describes the bustling preparations for the wedding. As a result, in Zeffirelli's version of the play, Juliet drank the potion to be subsequently found by the distraught Nurse; ignored was Shakespeare's striking transition from Capulet's festive wedding preparations to his mourning and funeral preparations, a contrast which William Poel had recognized and stressed as being essential to heighten the tragedy of the play. Also cut from the fourth act were the musicians; the act now ended with a procession carrying Juliet's "fair corpse unto her grave" (IV.v.93). Using techniques similar to those found in the spectacles of Irving, Zeffirelli attempted to effect a climax with a grand tableau in which anonymous servants were introduced mechanically, two at a time, to mourn for the supposedly-dead Juliet. Zeffirelli then opened Act V with Romeo crying, "Is it even so? then I defy you stars!" (V.i.24), the director's intent here being to heighten the effect of Romeo's outburst. Some critics, however, considered the almost filmic cut from Juliet's feigned death to Romeo in Mantua and its consequent omission of the first twenty-three lines of Act V, to be ill-judged. Echoing William Poel's

objections almost eighty years earlier about Irving's excisions to the last act, Robert Speaight called the cuts "unforgivable"; what sense, he asked, was left to Romeo's cry when the cause of his defiance was omitted?³⁵ Such damaging excisions made Zeffirelli's Romeo and Juliet, in his view, essentially a production for people "who are tired of Shakespeare."³⁶

In the concluding scene of the play Zeffirelli cut a hundred and twenty consecutive lines, those from the last of Juliet's "This is thy sheath; there rest and let me die" (V.iii.170) to the Prince's "Where be these enemies? -- Capulet -- Montague!" (V.iii.290). The outcry of the people, the "ambiguities," the concern to find the "head" and "true descent" of the calamity, the general suspicion in which the Prince at last finds himself implicated along with the others, the call for patience, the demand for "rigour of severest law," were all sacrificed. In this scene the omissions were not caused by shortage of time, because the scene was extended by much interpolated silent business. Anonymous servants embraced in pairs, symmetrically placed as a statuesque expression of general grief. Benvolio and the Nurse were then re-introduced to take silent farewell of the bodies.

Zeffirelli's excisions in the last scene were, again, strikingly similar to those in Irving's production. William Poel, by contrast, was one of the few directors in the twentieth century to insist on a completely restored finale. Since the second World War all productions of Romeo and Juliet at the Old Vic or at Stratford-upon-Avon had cut something from the last scene of the play. Glen Byam Shaw, for example,

at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1954 and 1958, omitted the dialogue between the Friar and Balthazar, cut lines on the entry of the watch, and eliminated some of the Prince's orders. The Stratford production of 1945 pruned the Friar's last speech from forty lines to six; that of 1941 omitted the Friar altogether after he had left Juliet. Peter Brook's production of 1947 deleted everything after Juliet's last words, and then simply brought on the Chorus to conclude with a few of the Prince's last words; time was made in the course of Brook's production, however, to introduce a Negro servant, an Arab carpet seller, a "man with a drum," and various other irrelevant attractions.

John Russell Brown, reflecting in 1966 upon post-war Shakespearean production, attributed all such omissions to a lack of understanding of some of Shakespeare's most important ideas: "Directors working in the English theatre do not respond to Shakespeare's presentation of authority and responsibility and of understanding, compassionate grief."³⁷ Shakespeare was deeply concerned with the ways in which responsibility is learned in adversity. The theme recurs at important crises in plays throughout his career: it is found when Richard II is imprisoned and when Henry V prays before Agincourt; and later, when Lear, Pericles, Cymbeline, Leontes, and Prospero become suppliants. William Poel's production in 1905 was one of the few Shakespearean productions from the Restoration onwards which recognized the importance of this theme.

In Zeffirelli's production the only hint of the awareness of responsibility came in the Prince's formal pronouncement "... all are punish'd" (V.iii.294) which was spoken as a howl of rage and pain. The

director ended the play with a slow procession as the supposedly reconciled families departed with composed neatness at opposite sides of the tomb, without a look at the dead bodies and without recognition of each other. A twentieth-century pessimistic conclusion was clear here: even if this strife had ended, conflict itself had not. Rather than stressing Shakespeare's healing of the feud with the deaths of Romeo and Juliet, Zeffirelli's silent procession emphasized just the opposite. The life and love of a young couple had indeed been sacrificed to the outdated values of an older generation.

It was Zeffirelli's intention, in his 1960 production of Romeo and Juliet at the Old Vic, to make one of Shakespeare's most performed plays alive and relevant to a modern audience. "Direction is not pure creation," he emphasized. "You take somebody else's conception and have to respect it. Your work is going to pass, their work is remaining."³⁸ Zeffirelli elected, in his presentation of the play, to stress the theme of a hopeless rift between generations. He succeeded triumphantly in conveying this aspect of the play; however, by ignoring the princeliness of bearing and of speech which have an essential place in a writer as conscious of social nuances as Shakespeare, he debased the built-in aristocratic sensibility of the young lovers, the young gallants, and the leaders of the two rival families. Often his relentless modernization of behavior on the stage succeeded only in trivializing the characters and the issues.

Judi Dench, in an interview with Gareth Lloyd Evans fourteen years after the production, saw the production as a characteristic

product of what she referred to as the "director's theatre." Some directors, she stated, "want very much to put their stamp on the play, to the exclusion of the author." After all, "they call it Zeffirelli's Romeo and Juliet," she said, "which isn't quite right." When asked by Evans how an actress so sensitive to the speaking of Shakespearean verse had allowed the play to be depreciated by neglect of its poetry, she replied that Zeffirelli had "got away with cutting a lot of the poetry" because for a long time people had been accustomed "to the poetry being 'used.'" In actual fact Zeffirelli used us (John Stride and I) because we were very young -- and we didn't know."³⁹

In 1982, Franco Zeffirelli, reminiscing upon more than twenty years of operatic and stage productions, gave his artistic credo: "I have no policy, no demagoguery, no ideals outside serving the audience and the author." Answering charges by his critics that he often created ambiances that overshadowed and overpowered the works at hand, he replied, "We have to bring people in to see things and go back home happy, with whatever device."⁴⁰ It was Zeffirelli's treatment of the young lovers, however, far more than his naturalistic settings, that endeared his production of Romeo and Juliet to audiences. The director had offered, said Dench, "something that nobody had probably seen for a long time, . . . two extremely young people playing Romeo and Juliet."⁴¹ The young lovers were not idealized as remote figures from another age but were presented as ordinary teenagers having much in common with young people in the twentieth century. Zeffirelli gave them life and vigour and restored the story to youth. The fact that his production remained in the repertory of the Old Vic for three seasons and was the most

successful production in that theatre for over a decade, proved that this director had helped perpetuate the continuing popularity of the play.

The Zeffirelli version of Romeo and Juliet, part of a larger movement towards eclecticism in handling Shakespeare, made its own memorable contribution to a century described as a time "in which, for Shakespeare, anything goes."⁴² What, then, had occurred since 1905 (for Zeffirelli's production was not an oddity), to cause a substantial retreat from William Poel's intransigent ideals to present the play in such a way as to be wholly faithful to the author's intentions; and, secondly, what has motivated the great diversity in the twentieth century presentation of Shakespeare on the stage?

In the sixty years immediately preceding Zeffirelli's production, the plays of Shakespeare have been presented in a large number of bewilderingly different ways. There have been modern-dress, open-staged, proscenium, in-the-round, eighteenth and nineteenth-century costumed, impressionistic, symbolic, naturalistic versions. Moreover, attitudes of scholars, critics, and the general public towards his plays have shown great variety. As a result the image of twentieth-century Shakespeare on the stage has become multi-faced. There are many reasons for this: the growth of techniques of staging and lighting; the development of different kinds of stages; the enormous proliferation of scholarly and not-so-scholarly interpretations of the plays, each based on a different philosophical perspective; the evolution of theatres wholly devoted to Shakespeare repertory; and the advancement of the idea that each director has his own particular contribution to make to the play in performance

style. Even more important, perhaps, in the re-interpretation of Shakespeare, innovations have become linked to contemporary drama and to new outlooks occasioned by two world wars.

Before World War I lavish spectacle was the dominating force in the presentation of Shakespeare, but by 1918 the British theatre was freed from its century-long obsession with "historical accuracy," and from then on directors could stage and dress a Shakespearean play in any mode, including the fashions of any historical period, which might enhance the play's meaning. Irving's and Tree's productions had reflected the glory of imperial Britain; romanticized spectacle after World War I was generally abandoned and Shakespeare was now sometimes used to present contemporary social and political concerns. Twelfth Night was no longer set in a stately English garden and in A Midsummer Night's Dream tame rabbits no longer lolloped across the stage. Because Britain had been through a war, Macbeth, in a 1920's production, became a colonel in the khaki of the British army, speaking his verse as if he were firing a machine gun. When, in 1933, the young Laurence Olivier acted Richard III he was aware, he later said, that a few hundred miles away across the Channel Hitler had come to power, and he acted his part with a consciousness that Shakespeare's play was relevant to the rise of fascism.⁴³

After the second World War the rise of Absurdist drama showed the tragedy and despair of man; audiences were usually no longer proffered the spectacle of a stable familiar past but were now often presented with abstract productions stressing emptiness and alienation. John Osborne's Look Back in Anger (1956), for example, embodied the subject of social

alienation and portrayed the angry young anti-hero Jimmy Porter trapped in a world of meaningless codes and customs. In a 1956 production of Hamlet at Stratford-upon-Avon the Absurdist bias could be seen as Hamlet moved on a free open platform with only a black velvet background. One isolated dark piece of cloth hung from an undefined point in mid-air, obviously a simple device for the eaves-dropping scenes. Here was no Denmark, no Middle Age, no tangible world at all, but only the lost modern soul standing exposed under a strong spotlight, as much a lost tramp under the empty stars as Vladimir and Estragon in Beckett's Waiting for Godot (1955), who wait for a Godot that never comes. Hamlet, similarly, was presented as a lonely existentialist individual, lost in a world without meaning, helplessly crying:

The time is out of joint. O cursed spite
That ever I was born to set it right!

(Hamlet, I.v.215-216)

Rather than ennobling man as Shakespeare does in his texts, the negative Absurdist religion, which showed Hamlet waiting for Godot, diminished man. Peter Brook's 1962 production of King Lear brought to a climax Shakespeare as Absurdist drama. While great thunder-sheets roamed the stage and rumbled at the audience, Lear became nothing more titanic than a wayward, tiresome old man, and Goneril merely a fussy, nagging, exasperated housewife. Looking at the play through existentialist eyes, Brook saw it as a tragedy not of redemption but of despair.

Freedom on the stage, however, bred license, too, and it is sometimes to be wondered whether twentieth-century experimentation in Shakespearean production really freed the theatre or only opened its

Pandora box. As early as 1934 Harold Child was making the following complaint:

At present the age shows signs of wanting merely to find some way of playing Shakespeare that has never been tried before . . . and tricks are played with the construction and the tones of the plays every whit as daring as those of Tate and Cibber. . . . The best possible base for all experiments would be a strong and active tradition that Shakespeare, as playwright, knew what he was about. The maintenance of that tradition is too much to ask of the theatre as at present conducted.⁴⁴

Thus, by the 1930's a competition for novelty among a number of Shakespearean producers was once again apparent, revealing a marked retreat from the ideals of Poel and Granville-Barker into some of the practices of former centuries. One of the most startling interpreters of Shakespeare in England during the 1930's was Theodore Komisarjevsky who presented a half dozen productions at Stratford-upon-Avon. His The Merchant of Venice in 1932 was at one a masque, a farce and a Venetian harlequinade. His Macbeth in 1933 dispensed with the supernatural, rendered the tragic experience as neurosis and nightmare, and bodied the play forth in modern military dress and aluminum walls. In 1935 he set The Merry Wives of Windsor in a comic picture-book background of nineteenth-century Vienna.

The dramatic annals of Shakespearean production in post-World War II years reveal an increasing number of directorial irrelevancies and tamperings with the texts. In a 1949 production of Troilus and Cressida, to ease the burden of the designer and the producer, all the love scenes were played consecutively, followed by all the political scenes; the production thus revealed a strong affinity with Augustin Daly's Shakespearean transpositions at the end of the nineteenth century.

Michael Benthall in 1953 staged All's Well That Ends Well at the Old Vic as a farcical comic strip with Molièresque doctors surrounding the sick king who indulged in spasms of vomiting.

From 1946 to 1960 at least fifty professional and amateur productions of Shakespeare were presented yearly in the United Kingdom. At Stratford-upon-Avon during these years all plays in the Shakespearean canon were produced except Comedy of Errors, Timon of Athens and the three parts of Henry VI. Plays such as The Merchant of Venice, The Tempest, and Othello were allocated five productions each; The Taming of the Shrew, Twelfth Night, Macbeth, and Measure for Measure were presented four times each; and three productions were given for each of Love's Labours Lost, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Hamlet, King Lear, and Romeo and Juliet.⁴⁵

The Old Vic during the 1950's similarly embarked upon an ambitious scheme to present the entire Shakespearean canon and by 1958 had successfully completed its "Folio in Five Years Plan." Directors were given free rein to produce the plays in any manner of presentation and with any interpretation they desired; however, J.W. Lambert in 1956 lamented that none of the productions displayed a sensitivity to the speaking of Shakespeare's poetry:

Director succeeds director, actors succeed actors, but the verse-speaking remains lamentable given rhymed couplets, the actors will do everything in their power not to speak them as such, even in an epilogue; and, in the rest of Shakespeare's torrent of varied sense and sound, false accents are absurdly frequent -- sometimes accidentally, sometimes, it seems as the result of misplaced ingenuity.⁴⁶

Such a statement shows that Zeffirelli's Romeo and Juliet in 1960 was not an anomaly in its neglect of Shakespearean poetry, but rather was continuing a trend already established at the Old Vic in the preceding decade.

It soon became apparent that the basic scheme in the "Folio in Five Years" was to do in each Shakespearean play something that had not been done before; the director, therefore, rather than the author or even a star-actor, was the dominating influence, and production style often took precedence over everything else. By the late 1950's it seemed that there had been almost a surfeit of Shakespearean productions on the English stage and that many of the novelties introduced by directors were merely devices to somehow bring freshness to Shakespeare's oft-performed plays. Alan Downer, a few years later, expressed such a view:

It is my own belief that English producers and actors are bored to death with redoing the plays of the master, and that each new director approaches his task first with a sigh and then with a question, what can I do to this work to make my contribution remembered.⁴⁷

In 1959, the year immediately preceding Zeffirelli's production of Romeo and Juliet, British directors continued to search for fresh expressions in their portrayals of Shakespearean drama. Peter Hall, in his direction of A Midsummer Night's Dream, emphasized the youth of the lovers and transformed them into modern hippy teenagers. Peter Brook, explaining his use of a circus for his production of A Midsummer Night's Dream in the same year, said that he could think of no symbols with which to conjure up fairyland for a modern audience, "so I turned to the arts of the circus, the tumblers, the acrobats, the jugglers and the slapstick

comedy of the clowns. I wanted to make it a joyful production. I felt a display of sheer physical virtuosity would achieve this."⁴⁸

Finally, during the 1960-61 season, while Zeffirelli for the main part delighted audiences with his enticingly youthful and energetic Romeo and Juliet, a number of other directors approached their productions with a view to setting Shakespeare in a variety of historical revolutions and making his characters and events somehow relevant to those rebellions. Thus, Troilus and Cressida was portrayed in the American Civil War, Coriolanus was set in the French Revolution and one faction in Julius Caesar was clothed in the uniforms of Castro's army.

In the twentieth century, says Kenneth Tynan, nothing has plagued the English classical theatre more than the problem of coping with "its permanent responsibility, its matrix, and its millstone -- the works of William Shakespeare."⁴⁹ Fashions in Shakespearean productions have succeeded each other: modern dress enthusiasts have vied with platform stage purists, the plays have been staged as Jacobean masques, neo-Victorian extravaganzas, exercises in Tudor rhetoric, expositions of Freudian dogmas, and Ruritanian charades. Contemporary scholarship, with its heavy emphasis on the conventional element in Elizabethan dramas, has not gone unnoticed. As Gareth Lloyd Evans points out, Shakespeare's work in the twentieth century has thus become "the stalking-horse for the whims, concepts, imaginative dreams, gimmicks, principles, and philosophies of those whose job it is to interpret him for the stage."⁵⁰

There are today two extreme attitudes. The first, ascribed to by Poel and his followers, is that a Shakespearean play should be done

"straight" as it were, uncut, and in such a way as to communicate Shakespeare's own intentions. The second claims that Shakespeare must speak for the modern world, and that, in order to do this, certain things must be done to the text, and the "meaning" of the play must be manipulated to meet the realities of the twentieth century. This is the view of Franco Zeffirelli and many other directors who have presented Shakespeare since 1945.

In the welter of diversity which characterizes twentieth-century production, in the fragmentation of actual production into the hands of all sorts of specialists, it is not surprising that everything to do with Shakespearean theatre itself displays diversity. Actors, through the century, have played Shakespeare in many different ways from classical to naturalistic, poetic to prosaic, lyrical to conversational, ritualistic to realistic. The fragmentation of the theatre is reflected in the world of dramatic criticism. We have had Marxist critics, socialist critics, Christian critics, atheist critics, impressionist critics. The eighteenth century, for example, had fairly rigid critical rules and principles for the presentation of drama on the stage, but in the twentieth century every individual critic seems to have his own sureties. There is no grand philosophy, no binding system of thought subscribed to by critics. "It is the absence of a reasonably common form, in modern drama as a whole," says Raymond Williams in Drama From Ibsen to Brecht, "that has led both to waves of fashionable emphasis or eclecticism."⁵¹ Such an absence, with somewhat similar consequences, is also abundantly apparent in twentieth-century Shakespearean production.

Conclusion

Joseph Knight, writing in 1894, remarked with indignation that David Garrick's 1748 production of Romeo and Juliet was actually Garrick's "mangled version" and "the earliest of these perversions of Shakespeare's texts."¹ Modern critics are also often inclined to dismiss Garrick as merely a mutilator of Shakespeare but such a view is simplistic. Despite Garrick's alterations to Shakespeare's language and in spite of his addition of the final love scene to the play, *Romeo and Juliet* are more indebted to him than to any other actor-manager in the eighteenth century for bringing them back from the characters of Marius Junior and Lavinia to a lasting life, love and death of their own. Altered though it was, Garrick's was by far the best text of Shakespeare's play which was carried on the English stage from 1680 until the middle of the nineteenth century. One must consider the life-giving quality which one of England's greatest actors gave to this drama; Garrick's production is of more than antiquarian interest because the more than three hundred performances of his version in the eighteenth century established a stage tradition and in a real sense gave a propulsion to the play which has carried on to our own day.

The production, however, must be called Garrick's "version," instead of his "restoration," for, aside from the excisions in the text, it also contains transpositions, emendations and additions to make the play more compatible with eighteenth-century tastes and critical rules. Such interpolations as a funeral procession and dirge with which Garrick capitulated to the competitive pressures of stage managership reveal that

in the production history of Romeo and Juliet the interpretation of the play is often influenced by conditions and prejudices outside the play itself.

It is Garrick's interpolation of the final love scene in which Romeo and Juliet lament their unlucky fate and take eternal farewell that reveals Garrick's greatest abuse of Shakespeare and shows him, despite his love for Shakespeare, to be just as exploitive as other producers before him. Famous actors and actresses of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who took the roles of Romeo and Juliet doubtless preferred Garrick's ending, for it gave them the stage, and it must indeed have been a moving theatrical experience to watch and hear the lovers as Romeo died in the arms of his grieving Juliet. Shakespeare, however, was not writing a sentimental drama but a grand, rich tragedy of human passion and responsibility. By bringing in the families and the Prince he seems to be deliberately playing down the lovers in this final scene and looking beyond them to a larger view of society.

Henry Irving's 1882 production of Romeo and Juliet, representative of the nineteenth-century trend to restore the texts of Shakespeare to a more original form than had been attempted in the eighteenth century, restored the prologue, an omission made by Garrick; it also rejected Garrick's popular ending for one more faithful to the Shakespearean text. However, because of Irving's desire for historical accuracy and spectacle in theatrical productions, he made assumptions about Shakespeare's own desire for outward trappings and sought to enrich the dramatist with the most lavish scenes and stage machinery. This simultaneous concern with historical accuracy in Shakespearean

production, an apparent abuse of the Elizabethan dramatist, together with a tendency to restore a more original text, a seeming adherence to Shakespeare's original intentions, appears anomalous to us today.

Irving was a superb producer of his arrangements of Shakespeare. He used movement and grouping to compose a series of marvellous stage pictures which were always dramatically as well as pictorially compelling. Processions, crowds and brawls were handled with immense skill and zest; and music, lighting and pageantry were utilized to enhance the dramatic effect of a scene. His pictures were universally praised; they were often accused of being too lavish and elaborate, but not of being garish or unharmonious. The point is, however, that for Shakespeare the opulent stage pictures that Irving created are not what is needed, no matter how beautiful. As a result of Irving's concession to the fashion of the time, the short scenes were run together, transposed or even omitted. Moreover, because of the exaggerated emphasis on spectacle the young lovers were at times relegated into subordinate and ineffectual figures and Shakespeare's passionate rapidity was chopped into a number of tableaux. For the production of Romeo and Juliet a brisk continuous tempo is vital to emphasize the motif of "sudden haste" which is found in the text repeatedly. The swift pace, momentum and general sweep of events effectively help to represent the "star-crossed" elements of the love story, as Romeo and Juliet appear to be struggling with growing urgency against an increasing concatenation of misfortunes that seems to emanate from "inauspicious stars" beyond man's control.

Twentieth-century critics almost invariably castigate Irving for using realistic settings in his presentation of Romeo and Juliet, but it must be remembered that this production belongs to a period when the public demanded paintings in which everything looked genuine, so naturally they were delighted with the huge, finely coloured pictures Irving presented to them on the stage at the Lyceum, scenes in which everything not only looked real, but often actually was real. Today we often criticize both Garrick and Irving for failing to realize that Shakespeare can succeed on his own merits but we must also recognize that their productions would have had little appeal to eighteenth and nineteenth century audiences without the embellishments so popular in theatrical productions in those centuries. The stage history of Romeo and Juliet therefore reveals that Shakespeare's text, written according to Elizabethan dramatic and theatrical conditions, appears to be incompatible with the conventions and conditions of later periods; the script must be "translated," adapted, or transformed in order to be presented successfully on later stages for audiences in subsequent centuries.

In his interpretation of Romeo and Juliet some of Irving's originality was an attempt to compensate for his own physical inability to portray a spontaneous, eager young lover. Irving, therefore, largely because of his own deficiencies as an actor, envisioned a whole production concept, organic to the play, which could accommodate his playing Romeo as a more mature, sombre lover. Making the whole character live, Irving worked out an intricate personality and displayed it with a mass of detail; consequently his performance was characterized by a

consistent display of a coherent personality. As a renderer of idiosyncratic character on the stage Irving was superb, but there is no question that the injection of mature passion into the roles of Romeo and Juliet does them great harm; spontaneity and youthfulness are the essence of Shakespeare's lovers.

So pervasive was pictorial Shakespeare by the beginning of the twentieth century that, from hindsight, it is obvious that a change had to come from outside, as it were, rather than from inside the regular established theatre. What was needed could not be done by a change in methods of painting scenery, or in scene settings or in stage machinery. There had to be a radically different conception of how Shakespeare should be performed. Such a change was effected primarily by the work of William Poel. It was Poel who first asserted that the whole approach to the current methods of staging Shakespeare was fundamentally wrong, demonstrating this fact not by criticism alone but by what Shaw later referred to as "desperate experiments."² Shakespearean plays such as Romeo and Juliet in shockingly mangled versions were being exploited as mere vehicles or shows. Poel proved that under sympathetic direction they need be neither; that they are far more interesting -- moreactable even -- if their integrity is respected. Devoting his entire working life to reforming the principles behind contemporary stage practices for Shakespeare, Poel never abandoned his original conception of Shakespeare as a consummate craftsman of the practical theatre. We are no longer startled by this conception but it was startling enough when Poel first proposed it. On the stage Shakespeare had lent dignity to the art of the

great actors but it was generally felt that the dramatist could not be trusted. It was Poel's revolutionary discovery that Shakespeare could be trusted. The best producers today accept the idea that the author knew his job and are prepared to concentrate their energies on what the author wanted, ensuring that Shakespeare's voice as storyteller is loud and clear and unimpeded by competition from other voices with other stories to tell.

Poel's scholarship emerged as part of his artistic method and, like all true reformers, he went back to first principles. The integrity of the text, the continuity of the action, the non-localized scene, the swift and musically inflected speech -- these were the things he fought for in his writings and these were the principles his 1905 production of Romeo and Juliet embodied. It was his contention that the stagecraft and dramaturgy of the plays were shaped by the conditions of the playwright's time and playhouse and that Shakespeare's art consequently belonged to the Elizabethan period. Shakespeare's plays, he stressed, were written for a non-realistic and non-scenic stage and they could not come across without distortion on a realistic one. The argument that Garrick, Irving and other producers had used that Shakespeare would have availed himself of the advantages of scenery and the fuller development of subsequent stages had his own opportunities been brought up to the level of later ages, was dismissed by Poel as totally irrelevant. Shakespeare had not used scenery, he emphasized, and his plays were not meant to employ it, nor were they written so that it could be used effectively.

However, just as Garrick and Irving had both been excessive in their productions of Romeo and Juliet, so might a similar case be made

against William Poel. As is the case of many reformers, Poel went to extremes, insisting that in order fully to understand Shakespeare's intentions, every effort had to be made to re-create the Elizabethan staging conditions that Shakespeare had used, so that a modern audience would be able to gain from Romeo and Juliet the same kind of dramatic experience as had an Elizabethan audience. A Shakespearean play done "straight," with the production taking account of all the Elizabethan meanings and nuances, attempting to communicate the play in an Elizabethan way, suggests a devotion for Shakespeare. It intimates an avoidance of gimmickry, a sense of values. But it is impossible. No one, in over three hundred years, has seen a play preserved in the circumstances for which Shakespeare planned it. We are not familiar enough with Elizabethan theatre conditions to know precisely how a play would have been presented on the stage at that time; a number of our ideas today about Elizabethan staging conditions are indeed only suppositions. As well, features such as the use of boy actors, sixteenth-century pronunciation, style of acting, and an audience with different beliefs regarding conduct and behavior are, as a whole, impossible to bring back. Moreover, many symbols of Shakespeare's staging understood by his own audience have since lost their significance. When, on the Elizabethan stage, Hamlet spoke of something "rotten in the state of Denmark," there, behind the actors, unchanging during the entire play, was a symbol of the realm. When a character spoke of the dangers to the state if a king is killed, there, on the stage, was a large, three-story symbol of the throne. When Romeo defied

the stars, there were the stars, visible to the audience in a canopy heaven.

For the 1960 Old Vic production of Romeo and Juliet an Italian director was asked to bring freshness to a play which had been presented almost every year during the century on the English stage. Franco Zeffirelli, seeking to restore the play to youth, generally delighted his audiences with his teenaged Romeo and Juliet. For once Romeo really was young enough to climb balconies and swing from trees so these actions were genuine projections of his youthfulness. Rejecting Shakespeare's built-in class structure, the director brought the play down to the level of the common man; the lovers were consequently presented as unaffected teenagers having much in common with young people in the twentieth century.

Zeffirelli, in the spirit of twentieth-century eclecticism, was not governed by a rigid set of critical theories and repudiated, as do the majority of twentieth-century Shakespearean directors, the strict Elizabethanism of Poel. His intention was less to restore Shakespeare than to adapt the dramatist to the concerns of the twentieth century, to make Shakespeare speak for rather than to the century. Zeffirelli was a part of that group of directors who sought a contemporary, sociological relevance in Shakespeare's plays, - and who contended that the dramatist should be used to treat directly some major sociological problem -- in Romeo and Juliet, the gap between the generations.

Zeffirelli's approach to Shakespeare, like that of many producers since the Restoration, is based on the premise that since the plays as written manuscripts were not utterly inviolable in the sixteenth century,

it is not only reasonable but also logical, to follow the same practice in the twentieth century. Also added to this premise is the attractiveness of the notion that it is wrong to make Shakespeare into an "antique," but exciting to make him up to date. Romeo and Juliet is viewed by many directors as a play of Shakespeare's artistic youth, full of poetic excesses that he was later to outgrow and refine; cutting, therefore, is not to be regarded as tampering with holy writ.

In his production Zeffirelli attempted to make the verse appear to be everyday conversational speech; hence a deliberate flatness of tone, punctuated by many pauses and obscured by stage business, was cultivated. The poetry was mumbled or muted and romanticism was sacrificed to an ungainly realism. The balcony scene, for example, was directed so busily that its still rapture vanished. Because of the director's over-emphasis on naturalistic speaking, most of the passion and poetry of the play was relegated to the commonplace. Each of Shakespeare's plays presents its own difficulty to the director. One difficulty of Romeo and Juliet is to balance the claims of poetry and action; Zeffirelli sacrificed the first to the second. Shakespeare's play is indeed a lyrical play and the words and music are therefore paramount. The moon-drenched duet of the balcony meeting, the torchlight aria of the Queen Mab speech, and the poignant farewell scene at dawn are all passages spun by a master weaver of language. The musical language is a vital part of the play and to reduce the lyrical effect is to destroy the magic of the play. Zeffirelli followed the notion that you keep Shakespeare alive by forcing him out of his convention.

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* move in a convention inescapably poetic: poetry is the rhythm to which they breathe, a poetry formal and almost liturgical at first, but gaining in freedom as they discover their identity in love. Because of Zeffirelli's neglect of the poetry and his over-emphasis on the feud between the families, there is some justification to Robert Speaight's charge that in this production there was more of "mafia than of magic."³

We today judge producers of former centuries for exploiting Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* but our age is just as guilty as previous ones. Zeffirelli's production, which is of our own time, is in some ways as abusive of Shakespeare as most versions from the Restoration to the beginning of the twentieth century. The eighteenth century believed that Shakespeare needed improving. It is a matter for argument whether this is a more pernicious notion than the one, believed by some twentieth-century producers, which states that Shakespeare needs modernizing. It is a curious philosophy that preaches the maintenance of the body (the text) yet insists on changing the soul (the meaning).

Notes to Introduction

¹C.B. Young, "The Stage History of Romeo and Juliet." In Romeo and Juliet, Ed. John Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), p. xxxviii.

Notes to Chapter I: David Garrick: Shakespeare Refined

¹in Cecil A. Moore, ed. Introd. to Twelve Famous Plays of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century (New York: Random House, 1933), p. vii.

²unknown writer, as quoted in Moore, p. vii.

³E. S. De Beer, ed. The Diary of John Evelyn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 431.

⁴Unity of action requires that not more than one thread of plot should be admitted into a play, and that all episodes not strictly necessary to the design should be rigorously excluded. Unity of time demands that the time of the action should correspond directly to the time of the representation; and the unity of place emphasizes that the place of the actions should not change during the course of the play.

⁵Robert Latham and William Matthews, eds. The Diary of Samuel Pepys (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1970), III, 39. Pepys also stated that he was "resolved to go no more to see the first time of acting"; the actors fumbled their lines on the first night of performance.

⁶"Stage Adaptations of Shakespeare," Cornhill Magazine, July 1863, p. 48. Natham Tate's Restoration adaptation of King Lear similarly provided a happy ending: Lear and Cordelia became reunited and lived happily ever after.

⁷The General Advertiser, as found in Kalman Burnim, David Garrick, Director (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1961), p. 128.

⁸Burnim, p. 127. Today a current play at a London or Broadway theatre may run for years, during which time it is acted every night and on frequent matinees. Different indeed was the situation in the eighteenth century. A run of nine or ten nights was considered good;

fifteen, unusual. Moreover, a play did not always hold the stage for all the nights of its run consecutively, but was interchanged with stock plays and revivals of various kinds. The success of a piece must be judged not by the length of its initial run, but by the number of performances it had throughout the entire season and by the number of seasons in which it was later revived.

⁹ George Winchester Stone, Jr., "Garrick's Significance in the History of Shakespearean Criticism," PMLA, 65 (1950), 186.

¹⁰ in The Sun, 13 March 1808; as quoted in Cecil Price, Theatre in the Age of Garrick (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), p. 3.

¹¹ Garrick Correspondence; as found in Frank Hedgcock, David Garrick and his French Friends (London: Stanley Paul and Co., n.d.), p. 60.

¹² Prologue to Catherine and Petruchio, in David Garrick, The Plays of David Garrick, eds. Harry William Pedicord and Fredrick Louis Bergmann (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press), III, 191.

¹³ George Branum, Eighteenth-Century Adaptations of Shakespearean Tragedy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), p. 114.

¹⁴ Samuel Johnson, Preface to Shakespeare's Plays (1765; rpt. Menston, Yorkshire: Scolar Press, 1969), p. xx.

¹⁵ David Garrick, Introduction to Romeo and Juliet: Bell's Edition of Shakespeare's Plays (1774; rpt. London: Cornmarket, 1969), II, 83.

¹⁶ David Garrick, The Dramatic Works, p. 95. All further references to this work appear in the text.

¹⁷ Margaret Barton, Garrick (New York: Macmillan, 1948), p. 97.

¹⁸ Francis Gentleman, The Dramatic Censor (1770; rpt. Farnborough, Hants: Gregg, 1969), I, 179.

¹⁹ Francis Gentleman, ed., Bell's Edition of Shakespeare's Plays (1774; rpt. London: Cornmarket, 1969), II, 93.

²⁰ Gentleman, Dramatic Censor, p. 173.

²¹ William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, ed. Horace Furness (1971; rpt. New York: American Scholar, 1963), I.i.201-207. All further references to this work appear in the text.

²² Gentleman, Dramatic Censor, p. 188.

²³ Gentleman, Dramatic Censor, p. 192.

- ²⁴Branum, p. 121.
- ²⁵George Winchester Stone, Jr., "Romeo and Juliet: The Source of Its Modern Stage Career," in Shakespeare 400, ed. James McManaway (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964), p. 200.
- ²⁶Edward Taylor, as quoted in Clarence Green, The Neo-Classic Theory of Tragedy in England During the Eighteenth Century (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), p. 167.
- ²⁷Gentleman, Dramatic Censor, p. 175.
- ²⁸Johnson, Preface, p. xxi.
- ²⁹Gentleman, Dramatic Censor, p. 175.
- ³⁰In the eighteenth century various changes were made to plays to heighten the roles of the major actors. The main characters were often given spectacular exit lines. Cibber, for example, closed every scene in Richard III with a soliloquy. Garrick's alterations to Romeo and Juliet show little sign of this mannerism. An acting style of "point-making," however, was common during the century; pauses were made after significant speeches by major characters so that the audience could clap.
- ³¹Stone, "Romeo and Juliet," p. 201.
- ³²Barton, p. 111.
- ³³Henry Fielding, Tumble-Down Dick; or, Phaeton in the Suds in The Complete Works of Henry Fielding Esq. . . . with an essay on the life, genius and achievement of the author by William Ernest Henley (London: F. Cass, 1967), p. 14.
- ³⁴Gentleman, Dramatic Censor, p. 176.
- ³⁵Gentleman, Dramatic Censor, p. 180.
- ³⁶Stone, "Romeo and Juliet," p. 203.
- ³⁷Cross in his Diary, 2 October 1750 (Folger Shakespeare Library) as quoted in Stone, "Romeo and Juliet," p. 203.
- ³⁸Arthur Murphy, The Life of Garrick (London, 1801; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1969), I, 192-194.
- ³⁹Burnim, p. 130.
- ⁴⁰Arthur Murphy [Theatricus], "Arthur Murphy on Romeo and Juliet," The Universal Magazine, Oct. 1762; rpt. in Shakespeare: The

Critical Heritage; 1733-1752, III, ed. Brian Vickers (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 379.

⁴¹Gentleman, Dramatic Censor, p. 185.

⁴²as quoted in Gino Matteo, Shakespeare's Othello: The Study and the Stage 1604-1904, Salzburg Studies in English Literature, No. 11 (Salzburg: Institut Für Englische Sprache and Literatur, 1974), p. 145.

⁴³Garrick, Introd. in Bell's Edition, p. 83.

⁴⁴To those Shakespeare plays not including a love element, such as some of the Histories, love scenes were added; if there were love scenes already, the plays were supplied with more. Nathan Tate's Restoration version of King Lear, for example, added a whole series of love scenes between Edgar and Cordelia who never exchange words in the original. In a version of Julius Caesar love dialogue was interspersed in the midst of political action.

⁴⁵Garrick, Introd. in Bell's Edition, p. 83.

⁴⁶Murphy, Life of Garrick, I, 152.

⁴⁷James J. Lynch, Box, Pit and Gallery: Stage and Society in Johnson's London (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953), p. 280.

⁴⁸Gentleman, note in Bell's Edition, p. 152.

⁴⁹MacNamara Morgan, Letter to Miss Nossiter, as quoted in George Winchester Stone, Jr. and George M. Kahrl, David Garrick: A Critical Biography (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), p. 568.

⁵⁰Gentleman, note in Bell's Edition, p. 152.

⁵¹Gentleman, Dramatic Censor, p. 188.

⁵²Walter Raleigh, Johnson on Shakespeare: Essays and Notes Selected and Set Forth With An Introduction (London: Henry Frowde, 1908), p. 188.

⁵³Garrick, Introd. in Bell's Edition, p. 83.

⁵⁴Gentleman, Dramatic Censor, p. 171; and Eliza Haywood, "On the Adaptations of Romeo and Juliet," The Female Spectator, Book VIII, (1745), ii, pp. 90-93; rpt. in Vickers.

⁵⁵Johnson, Preface, p. xxiii.

⁵⁶Johnson, Preface, p. xxii.

- 57 Gentleman, Note, Bell's Edition, p. 98.
- 58 Branum, p. 77.
- 59 Stone, "Romeo and Juliet," p. 199.
- 60 Branum, p. 90.
- 61 Gentleman, Dramatic Censor, p. 193.
- 62 Stone and Kahrl, David Garrick, p. 569.
- 63 Stone and Kahrl, David Garrick, p. 569.
- 64 Stone, "Romeo and Juliet," p. 206.
- 65 Thomas Davies, Dramatic Miscellanies (London, 1783; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1973), II, 368.
- 66 John Barnard, "Bottled for Public Taste," The Times Literary Supplement, 19 March 1982, p. 323.
- 67 Charles Grosvenor Osgood, Boswell's Life of Johnson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917), p. 168.
- 68 Joan Coldwell, ed. Charles Lamb on Shakespeare (Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1978), p. 35.

Notes to Chapter II: Henry Irving: Shakespeare In Sumptuous Garments

- 1 Hamlet at the Princess's and Romeo and Juliet at the Lyceum.
- 2 William Archer, About the Theatre (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1886), p. 239.
- 3 Inchbald, Mrs., Prologue to To Marry or Not to Marry In The British Theatre; or, A Collection of Plays (London: Longman, Hurst et al., 1808), p. B2.
- 4 John Hollingshead, as quoted in Henry Salerno, English Drama in Transition: 1880-1920 (New York: Western, 1968), p. 14.
- 5 Percy Fitzgerald, in The World Behind the Scenes (1881), pp. 20-1, as quoted in Allardyce Nicoll, A History of Late Nineteenth Century Drama (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1946), I, 29.

⁶As quoted in Clifford John Williams, Theatres and Audiences: A Background to Dramatic Texts (London: Longman, 1970), p. 77.

⁷As quoted in Arthur Sprague, Shakespearean Players and Performances (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 108. This statement comes from the preface to Irving's acting edition of The Merchant of Venice.

⁸As quoted in Madeleine Bingham, Henry Irving and the Victorian Theatre (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1978), p. 116.

⁹Preface to Irving's acting version of Romeo and Juliet, as quoted in Bram Stoker, Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving (London: William Heinemann, 1906), p. 59.

¹⁰Clement Scott, From "The Bells" To "King Arthur" (London: John Macqueen, 1897), p. 244.

¹¹Stoker, p. 59.

¹²As quoted in Austin Brereton, The Life of Henry Irving (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908), p. 354.

¹³Ellen Terry, Ellen Terry's Memoirs, 2nd ed. (London, 1908; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1969), p. 162.

¹⁴As quoted in Austin Brereton, The Lyceum and Henry Irving (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1903), p. 238.

¹⁵Henry James, "London Pictures and London Plays," Atlantic Monthly, 50 (1882), 262.

¹⁶Clement Scott, "Our Play-Box," The Theatre, 5 (1882), 235-236.

¹⁷Henry Irving, The Drama (1893; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1969), p. 50.

¹⁸Henry Irving, Speech to the 36th anniversary festival of the Royal General Theatrical Fund, 29 July 1881, quoted in Brereton, The Life of Henry Irving, p. 342.

¹⁹Alan Hughes, Henry Irving, Shakespearean (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 141.

²⁰As quoted in James Agate, Ego: The Autobiography of James Agate (London, Hamilton, 1935), p. 143.

²¹Although audiences generally were fascinated by Irving's mannerisms, many critics were not. In 1877 appeared the most famous attack on the mannerisms, The Fashionable Tragedian, in which William

Archer and Robert Lowe asserted that Irving, a good and potentially fine actor, had been spoiled by success, and had come to concentrate on the less essential histrionic qualities, such as intellect and picturesqueness (p. 5). They analyzed the limping, dragging walk, the spasmodic shoulder-movements, the head-noddings; and Irving's weak, loosely-built figure with its famous legs was accused, in a memorable phrase, of "stealing away from him" (p. 9). Other critics concentrated their displeasure on Irving's vocal defects, pointing out the very little resonance and almost complete lack of richness of tone, a high pitch and a narrow range, and no sustained power or variety in speech.

²² Clement Scott, "Our Play-Box," Theatre, 5 (1882), 234.

²³ Laurence Irving, Henry Irving: The Actor and his World (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), p. 386.

²⁴ Scott, From the Bells, p. 230.

²⁵ Charlotte Cushman, in an 1845 production of Romeo and Juliet, proclaimed that she had never altered a line of Shakespeare. An interesting feature of this particular production was that, to great acclaim, Charlotte played Romeo and her sister played Juliet.

²⁶ Scott, Theatre, p. 232.

²⁷ Edward Russell, "Romeo and Juliet at the Lyceum," Macmillan's Magazine, 46 (1882), 326.

²⁸ H.A. Saintsbury and Cecil Palmer, eds. We Saw Him Act: A Symposium on the Art of Sir Henry Irving (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1939), p. 224.

²⁹ Hughes, p. 162.

³⁰ Stoker, p. 62.

³¹ Terry, p. 166.

³² In Saintsbury and Palmer, eds., p. 224.

³³ As quoted in Brereton, The Life of Henry Irving, p. 354.

³⁴ Charlotte Cushman in 1845 restored both Rosaline and Lady Montague.

³⁵ As quoted in Brereton, The Life of Henry Irving, p. 354.

³⁶ Hughes, p. 6.

³⁷ Henry Irving, speech given in 1883 to the Edinburgh Pens and Pencils, quoted in Frederic Daly, Henry Irving in England and America (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1884), pp. 99-100.

³⁸ Stoker, p. 61.

³⁹ Russell, p. 328.

⁴⁰ Russell, p. 329.

⁴¹ Russell, p. 329.

⁴² Russell, p. 332.

⁴³ Bingham, p. 116. This opinion of Irving's appears in a preface to his acting edition of Richard III in which he emphasizes his restoration of the original texts of Shakespeare.

⁴⁴ As quoted in George Odell, Shakespeare From Betterton to Irving (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1963), II, 396.

⁴⁵ As quoted in Brereton, Life of Henry Irving, p. 354. In the preface to his acting edition of Richard III he similarly stated that he was presenting the original text without interpolations but simply such omissions and transpositions as had been found essential for dramatic representation.

⁴⁶ The rise of melodrama affected many Shakespearean productions in the nineteenth century; as a result melodramatic stage business became common. In a mid-century production of Romeo and Juliet, for example, the dying Romeo fell down a flight of stairs and then lay positioned with his face turned toward the vault. Juliet could then gaze down at her dead lover when she awoke.

⁴⁷ Sir Frank Benson in his book My Memoirs (London: 1930; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1971), p. 173, recounts his disappointment when, playing Paris to Irving's Romeo, he was given no chance to display his swordsmanship:

With one hand [Romeo] seized my foil, hit me over the knuckles with his own, prodded me in the stomach with his knee, again dashed his blade against mine, said, "Die, my boy, die, down, down," elbowed and kneed me into the mouth of the tomb, and stood in front of the dying Paris, brandishing a torch.

⁴⁸ Scott, From "The Bells," p. 242.

⁴⁹ Stoker, p. 61.

⁵⁰ Russell, p. 336.

- ⁵¹ Scott, Theatre, p. 236.
- ⁵² William Poel, Shakespeare in the Theatre (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1913), p. 154.
- ⁵³ Stoker, p. 293.
- ⁵⁴ In Odell, II, 427.
- ⁵⁵ Scott, From "The Bells," p. 244.
- ⁵⁶ As quoted in Edward J. West, "Henry Irving," in Studies in Speech and Drama in Honor of Alexander M. Drummond, ed. Donald Bryant et al. (New York: Russell and Russell, 1944), p. 187.
- ⁵⁷ George Bernard Shaw, Dramatic Opinions and Essays (New York: Brentano's, 1906), II, 55-56.
- ⁵⁸ James, p. 262.
- ⁵⁹ Edward M. Moore, "Henry Irving's Shakespearean Productions," Theatre Survey, 17 (1976), 207-208.
- ⁶⁰ West, p. 188.

Notes to Chapter III: William Poel: The Bard Restored

- ¹ Sir John Martin-Harvey, The Autobiography of Sir John Martin-Harvey (London: Sampson, Low and Marston, n.d.), p. 309.
- ² Herbert Beerbohm Tree, Thought and After-Thoughts (London: Cassell, 1913), p. 48.
- ³ Tree, p. 48. In the years 1898-1900, for example, Tree presented three plays at His Majesty's Theatre in London: Julius Caesar, King John and A Midsummer Night's Dream. Some 240,000 people saw the first, over 170,000 the second, and 220,000 the third.
- ⁴ in Austin Brereton, Dramatic Notes: An Illustrated Year-Book of the Stage (London: David Bogue, 1884), p. 65.
- ⁵ William Archer, About the Theatre (London: Fisher, Unwin, 1886), p. 243.
- ⁶ William Archer, The Theatrical World of 1895 (London: 1896; rpt.

New York: Benjamin Blom, 1971), p. 222.

⁷ Sir John Hankin, Letter, Academy, 5 Feb. 1898, p. 60.

⁸ George Bernard Shaw, Saturday Review, 2 Oct. 1897, rpt. in John F. Matthews, ed. Shaw's Dramatic Criticism 1895-98 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1959).

⁹ William Poel, Shakespeare in the Theatre (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1913), p. 120-121.

¹⁰ William Poel, "On Cutting Shakespeare," Fortnightly Review, 106 (1919), 480.

¹¹ Raymond Williams, Drama From Ibsen to Brecht (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 381.

¹² Constantin Stanislavski, My Life in Art, trans. J.J. Robbins (n.p.: Robert M. MacGregor, 1948), p. 330.

¹³ J.M. Synge, Preface to The Playboy of the Western World in Classic Irish Drama, introd. by W.A. Armstrong (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), p. 72.

¹⁴ W.B. Yeats, Essays and Introductions (London: Macmillan, 1961), p. 300-301.

¹⁵ Yeats, p. 240.

¹⁶ Q.D. Leavis, ed., Jane Eyre, by Charlotte Brontë (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), p. 11.

¹⁷ entry made on 23 Feb. 1877 in a diary that Poel kept at the time. As quoted in Robert Speaight, William Poel and the Elizabethan Revival (London: Heineman, 1954), p. 32.

¹⁸ Shakespeare in the Theatre is a collection of more than thirty years of Poel's articles, reprinted from such sources as The National Review, The Westminster Review, Era, and New age. Many of these articles were read, from 1881 onwards, before such groups as the New Shakspeare Society.

¹⁹ Speaight, p. 44.

²⁰ Tree's Shakespearean Festivals were held once a year, from 1905-1910.

²¹ Almost all of Poel's productions were given to small audiences. His only popular success was Everyman, unperformed and virtually unknown in England since the sixteenth century. This play was widely toured and regularly revived. Other productions received critical acclaim but were

not commercially successful. In his non-Shakespearean plays, for example, Poel re-established Marlowe's Dr. Faustus as an actable play, and directed a memorable Edward II in 1903, with Granville-Barker in the name part.

²²"Romeo and Juliet at the Royalty Theatre," Academy, 13 May 1905, p. 522.

²³William Poel, Shakespeare in the Theatre, p. 122.

²⁴Interview in the Daily Chronicle, 3 Sept. 1913, as quoted in Speaight, p. 90.

²⁵This drawing, by Arend Van Buchell, was a copy of an original drawing of the Swan made by Johannes Dewitt, a Dutchman traveling in England about 1596. The discovery of the sketch of the Swan Theatre was part of a new wave of Shakespearean scholarship, especially in the field of textual research. In the forefront of this movement were Dr. A.W. Pollard, with his emphasis on the value of the neglected Shakespearean Quartos as against the hitherto canonized Folio; and Dr. W.W. Greg whose bibliographical discoveries are of the greatest importance.

²⁶Poel, Shakespeare in the Theatre, p. 8.

²⁷"Shakespeare on the Modern Stage," The Times, 25 Oct. 1905, p. 5.

²⁸Speaight, p. 43.

²⁹Arthur Sprague, "Shakespeare and William Poel," University of Toronto Quarterly, 17 (1947), 32.

³⁰"Shakespeare as the Sleeping Beauty," The Times Literary Supplement, 2 June 1905, p. 178.

³¹Archer, The Theatrical World of 1895, p. 220.

³²Herbert Beerbohm Tree, Academy, 26 Feb. 1898, as quoted in Arthur Sprague, "Shakespeare and William Poel," p. 34.

³³Joseph Harker, Studio and Stage (1924), as quoted in Sprague, "Shakespeare and William Poel," p. 35.

³⁴George Bernard Shaw, The Nation, 5 July 1913, reprinted in Speaight, p. 105.

³⁵"Shakespeare on the Modern Stage," The Times, 25 Oct. 1905. Shaw's comment was part of a symposium held at Guildhall in 1905 and recorded by The Times, at which Shakespearean critics such as Tree, Poel, Shaw, Furnivall, and Gilbert gave their views on the best method of presenting Shakespeare on the modern stage.

³⁶Poel, Shakespeare in the Theatre, p. 59.

³⁷Joseph Knight, Theatrical Notes (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1893), p. 68.

³⁸Archer, About the Theatre, p. 246.

³⁹Poel's methods of casting his actors in a play such as Twelfth Night could also be compared to the casting of an opera with, for example, Viola as mezzo soprano, Olivia as contralto, Maria as high soprano, Orsino as tenor, Malvolio as baritone, Toby as bass, and Andrew as falsetto. A vocal range of two octaves would be required from each speaker.

⁴⁰G. Wilson Knight, Shakespearean Production (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), p. 217.

⁴¹"Mr. William Poel and his Work," Observer, 20 Oct. 1929, p. 13.

⁴²George Bernard Shaw, "Mr. Shaw on the Staging of Shakespeare," Pall Mall Gazette, 2 Dec. 1912, p. 5.

⁴³In many of his productions Poel maintained an extraordinary preference for casting women in leading male roles. No convincing explanation of this disconcerting practice was ever given, but at least he never claimed that it was Elizabethan. Perhaps he found women's voices easier to modulate in his teaching of "the tunes." Speaight (p. 138) recounts that Bridges-Adams, Poel's assistant stage manager discovered Poel one morning admonishing a lady who was standing before him in an attitude of visible distress. Poel's voice was raised in querulous criticism: "I am disappointed, very disappointed indeed. Of all Shakespeare's heroes Valentine is one of the most romantic, one of the most virile. I have chosen you out of all London for this part, but so far you have shown me no virility whatsoever."

⁴⁴Shaw, "Mr. Shaw on the Staging of Shakespeare," p. 5. This was no faint praise from a man who disliked romance in drama; who had called Shakespeare a "damned fool"; and who had repeatedly railed against Shakespeare's "monstrous rhetorical fustian," his unbearable platitudes, and his "sententious combination of ready reflections with complete intellectual sterility."

⁴⁵Harold Child, Letter to Poel, 9 Nov. 1933. As summarized in Speaight, William Poel and the Elizabethan Revival, p. 182.

⁴⁶"Shakespeare on the Modern Stage," The Times, 1905. The London Shakespeare League was founded in 1902 in support of Poel's ideas to annually produce a Shakespearean production or works of Shakespearean criticism, and to publish Shakespeare's plays without act or scene divisions.

⁴⁷M. St. Clare Byrne, "Fifty Years of Shakespearean Production," Shakespeare Survey, 2 (1949), 4.

⁴⁸William Poel, "The Stage-Version of Romeo and Juliet," Transactions of the New Shakspeare Society, 1887-92. 1st Ser. (London: Paul, Trench and Trubner), p. 229. In this transaction Poel criticizes Irving's production of Romeo and Juliet and thereupon outlines some of his own ideas about the play. All further references to this transaction appear in the text.

⁴⁹William Poel, What is Wrong With the Stage (London: Allen and Unwin, 1920), p. 7.

⁵⁰Arthur Colby Sprague and J.C. Trewin, Shakespeare's Plays Today (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1970), p. 51.

⁵¹William Poel, Letter to Dr. Furnivall, President of the New Shakspeare Society, 22 Oct. 1880. As quoted in Speaight, p. 48.

⁵²Speaight, p. 181.

⁵³Poel's speaking of Shakespeare's poetry is thus described by Harold Child, "Shakespeare in the Theatre From the Restoration to Present Time," in A Companion to Shakespeare Studies, ed. Harley Granville-Barker and G.B. Harrison (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1966), p. 345.

⁵⁴A.B. Walkley, Drama and Life (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1908), p. 137.

⁵⁵"Mr. William Poel and his Work," Observer, p. 13.

⁵⁶Robert Speaight, Shakespeare on the Stage: An Illustrated History of Shakespearean Performance (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1973), p. 132.

⁵⁷Speaight, Shakespeare on the Stage, p. 138.

⁵⁸Speaight, William Poel and the Elizabethan Revival, p. 46.

⁵⁹"A 'New Way' With William Shakespeare: The Work of Mr. William Poel," The Times, 30 May 1913, p. 5.

Notes to Chapter IV: Franco Zeffirelli:
Anything Goes -- Twentieth-century Eclecticism

¹Shaw recounts in the Pall Mall Gazette (Dec. 2, 1912, p. 5) that on this momentous occasion there were only about six people in the audience.

²Barker's methods of staging were revolutionary in England, even if they were influenced by what had already become commonplaces of the German theatre. M. St. Clare Byrne in "Fifty Years of Shakespearean Production: 1898-1948" (Shakespeare Survey 2, 1949, pp. 7-8) explains that in Germany a similar impulse to Poel's found expression in the professional theatre. Under the influence of the ideas of Appia, Craig and Fuchs, realism in staging of Shakespeare and the poetic drama was rapidly abandoned, to be replaced on the new "Raumbuhne" by simplified settings, permanent or semi-permanent, free of all superfluous detail and of wings and perspective scene painting, equipped in most cases with a cyclorama for open-air scenes, and in some cases -- as in the Munich Kunstlertheater -- with an arrangement of fore-, middle- and rear-stages that was almost Elizabethan. Stage Year Book for 1910 and 1911 juxtaposes in photographs current German productions in which all superfluous detail is eliminated, with two lavishly spectacular scenes from Twelfth Night as presented by Tree in Berlin.

In Barker's methods of staging a false proscenium, fixed in the actual arch, reduced the depth and width of the stage proper, which was then raised by the height of a couple of steps and thus provided an acting area which could be used for set or furnished scenes. The front of the stage and the portion actually spanned by the arch made a wider but shallow middle acting area, at a lower level; and this was enlarged, again at a slightly lower level, by having an apron built over the orchestra pit. Proscenium doors gave entry to the middle and down-stage areas and set speeches were delivered from the very edge of the stage directly to the audience. The footlights were abolished and the forward areas lighted from the front of the dress-circle by search-lamps converging on the stage.

³Harley Granville-Barker, Introduction to acting edition of A Midsummer Night's Dream (1914), as repeated in Robert Speaight, Shakespeare on the Stage (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1973), p. 141.

⁴F.J. Furnivall, in his preface to the Leopold Shakespeare (1877), estimated an average verse-speaking speed of eight hundred lines to the hour, a truly funereal pace at which the driving power of the lines would be completely lost. In Granville-Barker's productions this pace was accelerated to something over twelve hundred lines to the hour. Such a speed, says Kenneth McClellan in Whatever Happened to Shakespeare? (London: Vision, 1978, p. 104), is still a sound basis for computing the playing-time of a Shakespearean play, provided the cast all have good diction.

⁵Harley Granville-Barker, The Exemplary Theatre (London: Chatto and Windus, 1922), p. 208.

⁶Harley Granville-Barker, "Introduction to The Players' Shakespeare," (1923) in More Prefaces to Shakespeare, ed. Edward M. Moore (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 47.

⁷Kenneth Tynan, "The Straight Answer," Observer, 9 Oct. 1960, p. 24.

⁸Frances Stevens, "Romeo and Juliet," Theatre World, Nov. 1960, p. 7.

⁹John Russell Brown, "Zeffirelli's Romeo and Juliet," Shakespeare's Plays in Performance (London: Edward Arnold, 1966), p. 167.

¹⁰Franco Zeffirelli, as quoted in Alan Downer, "For Jesus' Sake Forbear: Shakespeare vs. the Modern Theatre," Shakespeare Quarterly, 13 (1962), 220.

¹¹Look at the Appendix for the major similarities and differences between Zeffirelli's stage and film productions.

¹²in Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy, eds., Directors on Directing (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), p. 439.

¹³Robert Speaight, "The Old Vic and Stratford-upon-Avon, 1960-61," Shakespeare Quarterly, 12 (1961), 426.

¹⁴Alan Downer, p. 220.

¹⁵Jack Jorgens, Shakespeare on Film (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), p. 87.

¹⁶Thomas Kilfoil, "Current Theatre Notes 1960-61," Shakespeare Quarterly, 13 (1962), 120.

¹⁷Cole and Chinoy, p. 439.

¹⁸Cole and Chinoy, p. 439.

¹⁹Zeffirelli added extensive stage business here. While Capulet spoke these lines he gestured across the stage to his wife, who glared at him and haughtily slammed a window shut.

²⁰Albert Cirillo, "The Art of Franco Zeffirelli and Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet," TriQuarterly, 16 (1969), 70.

²¹"The Zeffirelli Way: Revealing Talk by Florentine Director," The Times, 19 Sept. 1960, p. 4.

²² As quoted in Bernard Grebanier, Then Came Each Actor (New York: David McKay, 1975), p. 522.

²³ Grebanier, p. 522.

²⁴ Cirillo, p. 84.

²⁵ Cirillo, p. 84.

²⁶ McClellan, p. 182.

²⁷ J.C. Trewin, Shakespeare on the English Stage 1900-1964 (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1964), p. 206.

²⁸ Speaight, "The Old Vic and Stratford-upon-Avon," p. 425.

²⁹ Cole and Chinoy, p. 440.

³⁰ Cole and Chinoy, p. 440.

³¹ Cirillo, p. 79.

³² Tynan, p. 24.

³³ Brown, p. 167.

³⁴ Brown, p. 177.

³⁵ Speaight, Shakespeare on the Stage, p. 273.

³⁶ Speaight, "The Old Vic and Stratford-upon-Avon, 1960-61," p. 425.

³⁷ Brown, p. 175.

³⁸ Cole and Chinoy, p. 439.

³⁹ Gareth Lloyd Evans, "Judi Dench Talks to Gareth Lloyd Evans," Shakespeare Survey, 27 (1974), 137-138.

⁴⁰ "Touche! - Franco Zeffirelli Answers his Critics," Opera News, 13 March 1982, p. 26.

⁴¹ Evans, p. 138.

⁴² Gareth Lloyd Evans, ed., Shakespeare in the Limelight (London: Blackie, 1968), p. 104.

⁴³ Laurence Olivier in a television interview, summarized in Alick West, "The Importance of Shakespeare in Contemporary English Theatre," Shakespeare Jahrbuch, 103 (1967), 100.

⁴⁴ in M. St. Clare Byrne, p. 15.

⁴⁵ Norman Saunders, "The Popularity of Shakespeare: An Examination of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre's Repertory," Shakespeare Survey, 16 (1963), 18.

⁴⁶ J.W. Lambert, Theatre Annual, 1956, as quoted in McClellan, p. 180.

⁴⁷ Downer, p. 220.

⁴⁸ Peter Brook, as quoted in Normal Marshall, The Producer and the Play (London: Davis-Poynter, 1975), p. 326.

⁴⁹ Tynan, p. 24.

⁵⁰ Evans, Shakespeare in the Limelight, p. 104.

⁵¹ Williams, p. 397.

Notes to Conclusion

¹ Joseph Knight, David Garrick, pp. 115-117, as quoted in Stone, "Romeo and Juliet," p. 192.

² Bernard Shaw, Forward to Cymbeline Refinished (1937), in Complete Plays With Prefaces (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1962), IV, 781.

³ Robert Speaight, Shakespeare on the Stage, p. 122.

Notes to Appendix: The Zeffirelli Film Production of Romeo and Juliet

¹ Leonard Whiting, as quoted in Grebanier, p. 520.

² Franco Zeffirelli, as quoted in Louis Marder, "Sex in Shakespeare?" Shakespeare Newsletter, 17 (1968), 11.

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Appendix

The Zeffirelli Film Production of Romeo and Juliet

Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 film production of Romeo and Juliet, based loosely on his energetic stage production for the London Old Vic in 1960, is the most popular and financially successful Shakespearean film yet made. As is the case with the stage production, the film version takes a naturalistic approach, with the sense of period, mood and theme even more evident than in the stage production. Similarly, the film also reveals the director's intense interest in pictorial imagery and strives for energy, speed and even violence in its action scenes. However, because a number of similarities between stage and film exist, many people erroneously assume that the Zeffirelli film production is almost identical in treatment to his stage version. The following is a discussion of major similarities and differences between the two productions.

In both stage and film presentations, the director used actors as young as possible. Although the main actors of Zeffirelli's stage production, Judi Dench and John Stride, were both relatively inexperienced, both had done some Shakespearean acting before 1960. The twenty-six-year-old Dench had regularly performed in the Old Vic company since 1957 and the twenty-four-year-old Stride had made his Shakespearean debut in 1959. By contrast, neither Olivia Hussey nor Leonard Whiting, the teenaged hero and heroine of Zeffirelli's film, had ever acted before. Thus, blissfully ignorant, Hussey and Whiting were in a perfectly impartial position to agree with Zeffirelli that Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet is a "contemporary drama." Describing this play, which

contains some of the greatest lyrical poetry in English drama, Whiting went on to say, "I find Shakespeare very boring," but in Zeffirelli's movie there is so much action that "I don't think of it as poetry at all."¹

The Zeffirelli film emphasizes, even more than his stage production, the physical relationship between the young lovers. Romeo and Juliet, for example, are shown partially nude as they lie in bed after their wedding night. This was a ploy on the director's part to make Shakespeare on film more enticing to audiences who, in the 1960's, had become increasingly accustomed to the frank portrayal of sexual relationships on the screen. Replying to criticism that, in both his film versions of Romeo and Juliet and his 1966 The Taming of the Shrew, he had betrayed the dramatist's intention by over-emphasizing the physical relationships of the couples, Zeffirelli's response was, "I am [not] working for scholars. I am working for that nice audience -- the people who pay for tickets and want to be entertained." Shakespeare, said Zeffirelli, "is a gold mine for the cinema."²

In Zeffirelli's film production the film maker often by-passes the basic Shakespearean art, which is verbal, and substitutes for it the film art, which is pictorial. As a result, the film excises much more of Shakespeare's text than the stage production does. In the theatre, where the audience is distant from the action on stage, where certain things simply cannot be staged because of physical limitations of even the best equipped theatres, we need dialogue and expository scenes to explain events and provide transitions. Because a film can and should be more flexible, many of the words and scenes necessary on the stage appear

wholly redundant. The intimacy of film's art allows the camera to bring the action so close that the actors are able to communicate meaning and emotion by the minutest variations of facial expressions, movement or sound. Sometimes actors deliver soliloquies without opening their lips; language then often becomes superfluous and is sacrificed in favour of a glance, shrug, touch, or smile.

The Zeffirelli film, for instance, makes no mention of Rosaline until the later scene with Friar Laurence after Romeo has decided to marry Juliet. Romeo's interest in Rosaline is communicated visually; the audience knows that at the ball he is originally looking for another girl. When the camera pans a number of young ladies and then lingers on a very Italianate beauty dancing gaily in the foreground, Romeo seems to have found her. Then the camera continues to survey the dancing couples, finally stopping its restlessness to dwell on Juliet.

In the second half of the film Zeffirelli exercises bold pruning of the Shakespearean text, slashing out any scenes and verse passages that slow the action. By cutting rapidly from one scene to another the director effectively increases the pace of action to suggest and heighten the sense of swift movement towards the tragic climax in the tomb. However, a number of soliloquies, which slow the action and create isolated movements, are therefore unfortunately excised, including Juliet's "Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds" speech (III.ii.1-30).

Also cut is Juliet's brief scene alone after she has dismissed the Nurse:

Ancient damnation! O most wicked fiend
Is it more sin to wish me thus forsworn,
Or to dispraise my lord with that same tongue
Which she hath praised him with above compare

So many thousand times? -- Go, counsellor;
Thou and my bosom henceforth shall be twain.--
I'll to the friar, to know his remedy:
If all else fail, myself have power to die.
(III.v.233-240)

The film audience is not told of this rift between Juliet and the Nurse; instead, disillusionment and maturity are registered clearly on Juliet's face. The camera focuses on her youthful but serious face as it reacts to every line the Nurse speaks: the eyebrows arch when the Nurse calls Romeo a "dishclout" to Paris (III.v.219), and the mouth sets firmly as the Nurse tells her that this match "excels your first" (III.v.223). In the film Juliet merely says "Go counsellor" as she forcefully shoves back the curtains of her bed and pulls away from the Nurse's attempt to touch her sympathetically. Such action, in film, is to transfer to visual terms what needs to be verbalized on the dramatic stage.